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VICTORY OVER BLINDNESS

SIR ARTHUR PEARSON, BART., G.B.E.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF ST. DUNSTAN'S AND ADJOINING BUILDINGS AS SEEN FROM AN AEROPLANE
Taken during the war by a member of the Royal Air Force

VICTORY OVER BLINDNESS

HOW IT WAS WON BY THE MEN OF ST. DUNSTAN'S AND HOW OTHERS MAY WIN IT

BY

SIR ARTHUR PEARSON, BART., G.B.E.

Formerly Proprietor of *Daily Express*, *Morning* and *Evening Standard*, and a chain of daily papers in the provinces of England, and still Chairman of C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., publishers of several monthly magazines

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FOREWORD

This book is the outcome of many suggestions that there ought to be some permanent record of the life and work at St. Dunstan's, the Hostel for the soldiers and sailors of the British Imperial Forces blinded in the War.

It has been written in hours snatched from a very busy life. Indeed, the only really quiet time spent upon it was during the Atlantic voyage, of which I speak in Chapter XIII.

The fact that this account of the work of St. Dunstan's is in the past tense does not mean that at the date of publication of this book this work is at an end. As a matter of fact, it is still in full swing and will be for at least another eighteen months. My reason for writing in the past tense lies in my hope that in years to come the story of St. Dunstan's, the lessons it teaches, and the general outlook upon the life of people who lose their sight which it embodies may prove of some interest and value.

"Victory Over Blindness" is dedicated to all those who have so loyally and helpfully shared with me the privilege of caring for these blinded men. Were I to mention them by name I should know neither where to begin nor where to end,

for, besides my immediate colleagues, innumerable kindly and sympathetic folk have helped in a thousand ways to make the men at St. Dunstan's happy, to repay, as best might be done, the debt which is owed to them.

I must, however, refer here in terms of deepest gratitude to the sympathetic assistance always accorded to St. Dunstan's by its gracious Patroness, Queen Alexandra.

ARTHUR PEARSON.

February, 1919.

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VICTORY OVER BLINDNESS

VICTORY OVER BLINDNESS

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF ST. DUNSTAN'S AND WHAT IT BECAME

With practically no exceptions all of the soldiers and sailors of the British Imperial Forces blinded in the war came under my care, in order that they might learn to be blind, and how they have done this is the story—I think it is a very wonderful story—that will be told in the following pages. The gallantry of these men at the Front involved no greater courage than the sustained bravery with which they have faced all that the loss of sight means.

I want at the very outset to say that this book does not dwell upon the tragic side of blindness. We who are blind cannot see the glory of the sunrise, the splendour of the sunlit days nor the pageant of the sunset; we cannot see the tender

beauties of the moonlight night nor the brightness of the stars; the hills, the woods and the fields, the sea and the winding courses of the rivers are hidden from us; we cannot see the buildings of our cities, nor our homes, nor the movements of life, nor the faces of our dear ones. There is much that we cannot see; there is one thing we will not see, if we can help it, and that is the gloomy side of our lives. This is the gospel of St. Dunstan's.

The main idea that animated me in establishing this Hostel for the blinded soldiers was that the sightless men, after being discharged from hospital, might come into a little world where the things which blind men cannot do were forgotten and where every one was concerned with what blind men can do.

They would naturally need to be looked after and to be trained, and I was convinced that their future happiness, their success, everything, in short, would depend on the atmosphere with which they were surrounded. At the very moment when it would be most natural for them to be despondent I wanted them to be astonishingly interested. I wanted them to be led to look upon blindness not as an affliction but as a handicap, not merely as a calamity but as an opportunity. I believed that if they started with that idea, then, instead of dwelling with ever-increasing despair on their serious deprivation, they would be concerned at

once to see how quickly they could reduce the handicap. And so it turned out.

For some years I had been rapidly losing my own sight, and shortly before the War broke out my eyes completely failed me. I had been compelled to relinquish my chief work of conducting several daily newspapers, and for a time I went abroad. Very quickly, however, I realised that it is the blind man who, above all, needs occupation, and that the more active, the more normal he can make his life, the happier he will be.

There had been wonderful examples of blind men and women whose accomplishments appeared very marvellous. But the more I came in contact with the world of the blind the more it seemed to me that the dwellers in it were regarded too often as a people apart. There was too much pity for their blindness and not enough sympathy with their human natures. It seemed to me that blind people had in the past been generally treated entirely in the wrong manner. Sweet, kindly folk had talked to them about their affliction and the terrible difficulties that beset them. If you tell a man often enough that he is afflicted he will become afflicted and will adopt the mental and physical attitude befitting that soul-destroying word. I determined that at least in my own dealings with the blind the word pity and the word affliction should not be used. I set myself to live as active and as independent a life as possible,

and it became my ambition to do whatever I could to help blind people to escape from that passive half-life which seemed so commonly accepted as inevitable.

The blinded soldiers with whom shortly I was to come in contact represented, of course, an exceptional group in the blind world.

Blindness is largely associated with old age, with enfeebled bodies, and with extreme poverty. Those who are born blind or lose their sight in infancy are at a great disadvantage compared with others who have seen the world, and whose memories are stored with pictures of all that is in it.

The vast majority of the blinded soldiers (at the time of writing this book scarcely a sailor had lost his sight with the exception of a few men of the R.N.V.R. who had fought on land) were young and healthy, keen and ambitious; they were just the people to respond to the ideas that I had formed.

Before this, however, I had been busily employed in developing the work of the National Institute for the Blind—an organisation which in those days was almost entirely concerned in the production of Braille literature. Since I became its President the field of its activities has widened in many directions. The work involved in obtaining the very large sum which I succeeded in raising for its equipment and expansion during the

few months immediately preceding the War gave me an opportunity of feeling my feet as a worker without sight, and this opportunity was immensely amplified when I was honoured by the request to concern myself intimately in raising the National Relief Fund. From August 5th, 1914, until the starting of St. Dunstan's in February of the following year I was working at the collection of this Prince of Wales's Fund more busily than I had ever worked during a very busy life. All that I found myself able to do confirmed me in the ideas which I had formulated as to the way in which blind people should live their lives, and led directly to the realisation of the ideals which animated St. Dunstan's.

I have entered upon these personal details to show the steps which led me from a very busy life in Fleet Street to the equally busy life of caring for our blinded soldiers.

The first blinded man to be brought to this country was a Belgian; a rifle bullet pierced his eyes on the first day of the siege of Liège, and he was almost certainly the first soldier blinded in the War. Eventually he came to St. Dunstan's as did seven other Belgians who lost their sight before the Belgian authorities had been able to make adequate arrangements for the care of their wounded. Nearly all wounded Belgians in the early days of the war were sent to English hospitals. We also had the pleasure of welcom-

ing one French officer and three French private soldiers whom I had met while on a visit to the various establishments throughout France at which French blinded soldiers were cared for, and who had evinced a particular desire to make a stay with us. It was while I was still occupied with the Prince of Wales's Fund that I went frequently to visit him in hospital. Then I heard of two of our own men who had lost their sight, a sergeant and a private, both of whom had been taken to St. Mark's Hospital in Chelsea—the 2nd London General Hospital, as it was officially called. The private, poor fellow, died of his injuries.

Like most people at that time, I imagined that the War would be of short duration. But it was certain that among the wounded would be many blinded, and I was naturally concerned—as were all the members of the Council of the National Institute—that everything possible should be done for them after medical science had performed its wonderful work.

I pictured these men after their discharge returning to their own homes, where, for all the love that might surround them, they would probably slip into hopeless and useless lives, and the idea developed itself of a Hostel where they could "learn to be blind." That phrase meant a great deal more to me than mere instruction in some industry. It involved a mental outlook, and to

establish this I thought that if they could step at once into a world where, as I have said, blindness was regarded as a handicap only, a little world very much in touch with the big world around it, there would be no time for depression and its attendant evils. The interest in conquering blindness would begin at once. After all, it can be made very interesting to start a new life. For that is what a blinded man has to do. He has to learn to walk firmly and freely again, feeling his way about at first; he has to learn to read and write, using new methods and appliances; he has to learn to do things with his hands without the direction of the eyes, his first efforts as clumsy as those of a child. And he has to discover afresh his powers of accomplishment and enjoyment.

One thing he cannot do—he cannot see—and the sooner he ceases to repine for those pleasures that depend essentially on sight the better. But other senses begin to develop latent and unsuspected powers. The pleasures that seemed absolutely lost become miraculously reduced in number. Mental vision—the common gift of picturing the unseen—comes more and more into play. Sounds, touches, scents, convey to him images that, coloured by experience and imagination, arise realistically out of the darkness.

And as the blind man finds himself increasingly self-reliant, taking something like his accustomed place in the world, astonishing himself even more

than he astonishes others, to whom he seems something of a miracle, the sense of happiness grows.

For my Hostel I had the idea of a place with plenty of room to move about and with large and beautiful grounds. I wanted delightful surroundings. Directly or indirectly surroundings have their influence on the blind. Moreover, I wanted to find these desirable conditions in a central part of London. That I was able to do so was due to the immense kindness and generosity of Mr. Otto Kahn, the well-known American financier, who placed at my disposal St. Dunstan's, his residence in Regent's Park, a spacious and splendid house with grounds extending over fifteen acres, where you might well believe yourself in the heart of the country. But Mr. Otto Kahn did not only place St. Dunstan's at the service of the blinded soldiers, free of any charges whatever. He maintained the grounds and to some extent the house itself; he was a generous donor to the General Funds, and he gave me absolute *carte blanche* to erect any buildings and effect any alterations that I thought fit to make. At the moment of writing, the once beautiful gardens of St. Dunstan's are almost covered with workshops, classrooms, offices, storehouses, chapels and recreation rooms, while additions to the house extend on all sides, and the vast building which we call the Bungalow Annex covers one of the fields.

It is only sober truth to say that Mr. Otto

Kahn's magnanimity had a great deal to do with the success with which the work at St. Dunstan's was crowned. A mere house in London, however large, and wherever situated, would have left unfulfilled the many purposes for which the spacious grounds of St. Dunstan's were used—grounds larger, I believe, than those of any residence in the Metropolis, excepting those of Buckingham Palace, while had we been obliged to set ourselves up outside London the ready and spontaneous help which was forthcoming to meet our multitudinous requirements would have been sought in vain.

However, the actual start was not made here, but at a house in Bayswater Hill kindly lent to us by Mrs. Lewis Hall, a continuous benefactor to the blinded men, while certain necessary alterations were being made at St. Dunstan's. We began there in the early days of February, 1915, with two blinded soldiers. When, on the 26th of March, the move was made to St. Dunstan's there were sixteen men to care for, and before the end of 1918 there were over 1,500 names on the books of St. Dunstan's, and five larger establishments, with the original house of St. Dunstan's as their centre, in London, in addition to several annexes in the provinces, barely provided the accommodation we required.

How big St. Dunstan's seemed when we first moved there with our sixteen blind men, and the

comparatively small staff that was then necessary! How quickly this palatial residence became too small for our requirements!

I confess to some pride in the fact that though one could never tell what the future needs might be we were always prepared, so that in spite of all difficulties the work never suffered because of its swift and often unexpected expansion.

The original house of St. Dunstan's was first increased in size; the large gardens gradually became covered with the buildings I have just referred to. Then a house was taken over in Sussex Place, which is quite close to St. Dunstan's; it was reserved entirely for men learning massage.

Next to St. Dunstan's, in the outer circle of Regent's Park, is a mansion standing in spacious grounds, ordinarily used as a college of the Baptist Church. It was most generously lent to us, and for a time this College Annex seemed likely to provide for all our requirements.

But all too soon more room was needed, and the Bungalow Annex was erected. Its position was ideal, for the field it covered formed the boundary between the two properties on which the other great houses stood.

Then three large houses near by, in Cornwall Terrace, were joined together, while in Titchfield Terrace—which lies quite close at hand—smaller houses were taken one after another for the extra accommodation of the V.A.D.'s and for the enter-

tainment of the relatives of the blinded soldiers who came to London from time to time as our guests.

You see how the work grew.

And it had become necessary to establish centres away from London where special cases could be treated, pleasant homes where men could be sent for periods of convalescence or for holidays.

A magnificent establishment of this kind close to the sea, with two acres of grounds, was opened at Brighton. This valuable and ideal property was presented to the blinded soldiers by the Federation of Grocers' Associations, and it will be used as a convalescent and holiday home as long as there remain alive any of the men who have passed through St. Dunstan's. There was a smaller establishment in Queen's Road, Brighton, placed at our disposal by the National Institute for the Blind, an Annex at Torquay, for some time supported by the generosity of local sympathisers, which was afterwards transferred to St. Leonards; a Convalescent Home at Ilkley in Yorkshire was the generous gift of Mrs. Grove Grady; and a large house in Blackheath, with charming gardens, the long lease of which was given by Mr. A. N. Kilby, provided a retreat for the men nearer to London. Two other fine establishments, which as I write are occupied by the Red Cross, will, when the need for their present

use comes to an end, be placed at the disposal of blinded soldiers. One is Bannow House, St. Leonards-on-Sea, which has been purchased and largely endowed by the Dickens Fellowships; the other Suffolk Hall, Cheltenham, which has been given by its liberal owner, Mr. W. A. Bankier, who has undertaken to pay all costs of reconstruction and re-arrangement.

The blinded officers occupied two large establishments in Portland Place, London, W., one of which, a very fine house, was most generously placed at their disposal by Sir John and Lady Stirling Maxwell. Two others at Hove served them as convalescent and holiday resorts, while a place on the river at Bourne End afforded a week-end residence in the summer.

Soon after it was opened St. Dunstan's was officially recognised as the centre for the care and training of the blinded soldiers and sailors.

It was, of course, entirely optional with the men whether they came to us or not, and at first there was the difficulty of getting in touch with them, since they were sent to hospitals in all parts of the country. I asked Surgeon-General Sir Alfred Keogh, who showed himself to be always most helpful and friendly, to use his influence in this matter, and as a result every effort was made to send all the blinded men when they reached England to the 2nd London General Hospital. This arrangement was indeed essential to our work.

I wanted to be able to visit the men at the first opportunity, to speak to them of hope, to tell them what their comrades in blindness were already able to accomplish.

The system of training which was introduced at first stood the test of experience in a way that was interesting. We were always ready and eager to try new ideas, but the original plans proved to be the best. Before St. Dunstan's started I called together a score of men and women who could be looked upon as those most capable of offering advice in regard to the subjects in which instruction should be given. As a result of a long conference and some rather revolutionary ideas of my own, the eight trades and occupations which the blinded soldiers have taken up were initiated and pursued. Nothing has led me to the belief that any mistake was made in selecting massage, shorthand writing, telephone-operating, poultry-farming, joinery, mat-making, boot-repairing and basketry as providing the most practical openings for the sightless man who desires profitable work. Netting, in a great variety of forms, was later added to the list, but it could scarcely be held to rank as an occupation. I always regarded it as a paying hobby, at which a nice little sum could be made every week in spare time. It had this great advantage, that it taught the men to be handy while it provided a much needed interlude in the trying task of learning Braille.

During the War I made two journeys to France and visited a number of the comparatively small and scattered institutions at which the blinded French soldiers were being trained. Some things were being taught there which we did not teach, but nothing which we thought it well to add to our list.

We found as a rule that in from six to eight months a man's training in the simpler occupations was completed. Massage and shorthand writing took rather longer to acquire. The speed at which the men learnt was quite uncanny, and be it remembered that at the same time they were mastering Braille, typewriting, and many other things. It is a literal fact that the men at St. Dunstan's became proficient in their industries in a mere fraction of the time that is considered necessary in ordinary institutions for the blind.

This speed of re-education meant that St. Dunstan's was scarcely organised before it became necessary to develop plans for the settlement and after-care of the men.

Without anticipating the subject of future chapters I may say here that the after-care system was quite a new departure in the world of the blind. It has involved a large organisation spreading out over the entire country. It is the system of keeping permanently in touch with the men of St. Dunstan's.

Though the majority of these men belonged to

our own forces, there came to us also the Canadians, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Newfoundlanders and the South Africans.

Not all St. Dunstaners were dark blind, but all had their sight so injured that they were incapable of pursuing an ordinary life. "Unable to read or write, or to do ordinary work in an ordinary way," became our official definition of blindness.

About one-third of the men who came under my care had been deprived not only of sight, but of the eyes themselves. The same proportion were what is known as "dark blind." The remaining third could distinguish light, and of these a small number had some degree of what might be called sight.

A mere glimmer of sight is in many ways a danger and a disadvantage to a man, an occasion of stumbling. It may well hamper more than it helps, failing a man like an unreliable guide. It is a real drawback in the training of one who has to face the prospect of becoming later totally blind, for, trusting a little to his sight, he does not develop fully the resources of those other senses on which he must presently come to rely.

A man may be absolutely blind without any appearance of injury to his eyes. The damage may be done to the optic nerves or to that part of the brain at the back of the head where the light impressions become transformed into pictures that are seen.

Partial injuries lead to many complicated and strange effects of partial sight. Thus a man may see no more than the heads of people approaching him, or he may see only an object directly in front of him, and this surrounded by a black disc, beyond which there may again be a glimmer of sight.

In a very few joyous cases has it occurred that the sight which seemed lost has returned.

At the beginning of the War the majority of the men who came to St. Dunstan's had lost their sight as the result of bullet wounds. And it is a curious fact that of the first sixty who reached us forty were Lancashire lads. Rightly or wrongly, I put this undue proportion down to the fact that they were just that type of Lancashire men who, when told to keep their heads under cover, would, in defiance of danger, want to see what threatened them.

Later on we had more and more cases of men injured by effects of bombs and of shell-fire. Many were not only blind, but had received other wounds, had lost a hand or an arm or a leg, or were the victims of shell-shock. One fellow of splendid pluck and determination had lost both his hands, but in spite of his tremendous double handicap he is, as I write, doing excellent organising work in the offices of the National Institute for the Blind. Special devices enable him to use a typewriter. He feeds himself and does many

things which his tremendous handicap would seem to render impossible.

The hand has to the blind man an infinite value. Always the greatest care was taken to restore usefulness to the hand that was injured. Artificial limbs were of course provided for the disabled, and a series of experiments was entered on to discover what manner of arm was best suited for the blind man, so essentially dependent upon the sense of touch.

Long after their wounds had healed men sometimes suffered from headache and malaise. All the more wonderful was the spirit of cheerfulness that always prevailed; nothing could ever be written that would be a just tribute to the courageous bearing of these men. In the same breath, I think, a tribute should be paid to the spirit of the little army of helpers—among them many themselves blind—who devoted themselves to the work of caring for the blinded soldiers. Undoubtedly there is something in the fight against blindness which brings out the best both in those who fight and in those who help them in their struggle.

Before the end of 1918 over six hundred men had already learned to be blind and had returned to their homes. Nearly seven hundred were still in training at St. Dunstan's and at the various annexes, and nearly two hundred more were still in hospitals. Fifteen hundred men, and more than eight hundred people engaged, in one way or an-

other, in contributing to their happiness and welfare.

There were, among these, five hundred and ninety-five women—including matrons, V.A.D.'s, nurses, teachers of Braille, typewriting and music, regular visitors, and those who came to read to the men and take them for walks, and secretaries.

The male staff numbered two hundred and ninety-three—there were the adjutants, the oculists, the doctors, the chaplains, the workshops teachers, poultry-farm instructors, accountants, orderlies, walkers, masseurs, chauffeurs, porters, gardeners, scouts, and those engaged in the Pension, the Settlement, and the After-Care Departments.

In days when I could see I had the direction of some big enterprises, but St. Dunstan's became the biggest individual business that I have ever conducted.

CHAPTER II

A DAY AT ST. DUNSTAN'S

Let me give you a picture of St. Dunstan's. We will choose an ordinary working day and the time shall be summer.

You approach the house along the broad, tree-bordered road on the western side of Regent's Park. To the right are smooth lawns leading down to the lake. By the side of the footpath is a fence, and perhaps with his stick sometimes touching this fence you may chance to meet a blind man walking so fast and so surely that probably you will scarcely realise he is blind. Behind him may come two others arm-in-arm, whistling as they swing along, or, perhaps, a group of three, the central figure a sighted man who, almost without the appearance of doing so, guides his companions.

These men are walking to the National Institute for the Blind in Great Portland Street for the advanced course of instruction as masseurs. At the sight of them you realise that you are nearing the Kingdom of the Blind. And, almost at once, you

come to the entrance of a carriage-drive where a sign-board gives instructions to motors how to proceed. At the porter's lodge is a one-armed ex-sergeant whose special function it is to see that the way is clear for any blind men coming out. You see a handrail for their guidance if they need it.

The gravel sweep in front of the house is largely occupied by a one-storey wooden building of the army-hut order—it is one of the men's dormitories, which was given by Lady Beatty, the American wife of our Naval Chief. St. Dunstan's itself, a large, white, rambling mansion, is entered through swing doors. Above these doors might well be written the words of the blind poet: "Nothing is here for tears."

St. Dunstan's has been called by many names by writers who have visited it; some have called it the Palace of Hope; it has been called the House of Good Comfort; it has been called the Home of Happiness—and the last name is the one I like the best, for happiness has always meant so much at St. Dunstan's. It meant that the men there were content with the lot that the Fates had dealt out to them. It meant that they had conquered a foe who threatened to destroy spirit as well as sight. It meant that these determined men had dragged themselves from the dark morass in which they were plunged, that they had set their feet on the velvety, flower-spangled lawns which lead through

the Garden of Endeavour out on to the broad highway of Normal Life.

Let me take you through this Home of Happiness.

When you enter the hall of St. Dunstan's you will find that the floors present a curious and unusual appearance. They are carpeted, but linoleum paths run through the carpets, the object of which is to enable the blinded men to find their way about unaided. Visitors are requested not to stand about on the linoleum paths, or even to walk on them. They are solely for the use of the blind men who hear one another coming and going and after a few weeks—in some cases a very few days—walk about the great house with a firmness and readiness which lead many people to find it very difficult indeed to believe that they cannot see where they are going.

The hall presents a busy scene. It is a few minutes after twelve o'clock, the hour at which morning work ceases. Blinded men are moving about with amazing certainty, passing one another without hesitation on the narrow pathways. Perhaps two collide. If they do—well, a newly-blinded man's day contains many encounters with unexpected obstacles which must be met with cheery stoicism. The most annoying of these is the edge of the half-open door—an ever-present danger, the thinness of which makes its detection difficult. I very often said to a man when he first

arrived—"Remember, old chap, there is only one way to learn not to bump your nose on the edge of a door, and that is to bump it!"

Some of the men are in uniform, but the majority, having been discharged, wear ordinary civilian clothes; they probably have flowers in their buttonholes; they are almost certainly smoking. And some sing out in a cheery voice to clear a way for themselves. There are groups of visitors, men talking to their relatives, some perhaps to their children, who have often brought a bunch of flowers to Daddy, V.A.D.'s in their attractive uniform and regular helpers who have come to take their *protégés* for walks.

Open doors lead out into the garden. The principle of the guiding pathway is continued in the grounds. Wire pathways cross the stone terraces. At the top and the bottom of steps, in front of walls and other obstacles, are boards let into the gravel and when his foot touches these boards the blind man receives the warning he needs. There are handrails with knobs upon them to denote turns, and there are a great many ingenious devices which tend to help a man towards the regaining of his lost independence. With surprising rapidity the men of St. Dunstan's learnt to disregard these precautions. After a man had been there a few weeks, as a rule one found him walking about taking no notice of the boards or the handrails. Some got on better than others. The young-

er men always proved to be more daring than the older, and the quite blind developed greater assurance than those with a glimmer of sight.

From the terrace in front of the house a sharply sloping bank leads to a wide lawn. On both sides the lawn is flanked with new wooden buildings. At the end the ground again slopes steeply, necessitating eighteen steps, and below are the classrooms and workshops. And these buildings, all of which I planned, spreading out like a little township, with covered wooden sidewalks, I see in my mind's eye as clearly as those who are sighted behold them. Chairs are scattered about—there are little groups of V.A.D.'s off duty, or reading to some blinded soldiers who do not feel like a brisk walk or a row on the lake. No sound is here of London traffic—you hear the songs of many wild-birds. Here is that very pleasant smell of new-cut grass, all those freshening scents that belong to a garden on a sunny day at the best time of the year. The rustle of the breeze in the foliage is creative to the blind man—making the trees stand out clearly to his mental vision.

Beyond the new buildings the garden extends, with a tennis-court and great borders of flowers —and through a wilder, tree-shaded part you come to the poultry farm. An arm of the lake runs up to the garden, which is shut in by shrubs and trees from the wide, open space of the park.

We will go through the garden and along the

covered pathway till we come to the great class-rooms where the men are taught to read and write by methods that are both quite new and quite unfamiliar to them.

Work began at 9.30. But by 6.30, after an early cup of tea, many of the men were already rowing on the lake, steered by lady coxswains who had risen still earlier to come from distant parts of London for this excursion on the water. Others had found companions for a swinging walk of two or three miles before breakfast.

Breakfast over, there was a gathering of the men to hear the news read to them from the morning papers—papers that had already been gone through for the selection of the most interesting items and comment.

The general plan of work is two and a half hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, but morning and afternoon there is the option of an additional hour's instruction, an option of which a good many men avail themselves, particularly if they are putting the final touches upon their occupation or handicraft. Half the working day is spent in the class-rooms; the other half in the workshops. The work is varied and the hours are short—factors which have much to do with the almost incredibly rapid progress that is made.

As you enter the class-rooms you will notice each man sitting at a table with his individual teacher—some have carried their tables out on to

the lawns; you see little groups scattered about under the shade of the trees.

Here are men learning to read and write Braille; there are others mastering the intricacies of shorthand. In a separate room instruction is being given in typewriting; you can look in at the miniature telephone exchange.

There will be another occasion for a detailed examination of the work. Now I merely want to give you a bird's eye view of the place.

Is there a more interesting school scene to be seen in the world?

The rooms are lofty and airy—the summer sunlight pours in through open windows and doors. There are glimpses of the garden and of trees. The red uniform of the Commandant makes a splash of colour, and the cheerful atmosphere of the room, influencing those who can see, communicates itself indirectly to the others. Every pupil has his teacher—and these teachers are ladies who voluntarily come daily, in spite of any other calls, in spite of any stress of weather, to help these blinded soldiers learn again to read and write. Some of these teachers themselves are blind—and the blind scholars, patiently starting once more with their A B C's, are men of all ages, some mere boys, some as old as a man may be and remain in the Army, men of many climes, men who before being soldiers were doing all kinds of work —farm-hands, miners, labourers at every sort of

industry, engineers, chemists, businessmen, scholars—men of learning beginning again side by side with others who in the past have troubled little enough about education.

Opening out from the class-rooms is a department devoted to netting. Braille is exacting. We do not find it advisable to keep men at it too long—after an hour or so of study they can turn to the recreation of the simplest kind of manual work for the blind. If the spacious room, gay with hammocks and nets of an incredible variety, seems largely deserted, go out through the open doors into the sunshine—you will discover there groups of men smoking and talking while they work, finding knots in string far easier to make than it is to unravel the meaning of the intricate little groups of dots that form the characters of Braille.

Now let us pass from the class-rooms down the covered pathway to the workshops adjoining. On our way we may pause to look in at the room in which is given preliminary instruction in massage. A number of men, seated round a table, are passing from hand to hand bones and models of various portions of the human frame while they listen to a lecture on anatomy. In a room beyond there are students partially stripped and stretched on couches where they are being massaged by other students—discovering by practical experience the sensations of a patient and proving, to judge from their comments, no more ideal patients than doc-

tors in general do when they come to take their own medicine.

Leaving the students' quarter we come to the manufacturing district of our little township.

The workshops form one large building in the shape of a capital E. A very large number of men are busy here—it is a scene of intense, orderly activity and movement; and on all sides you will hear men whistling or singing as they work. The Cobblers' Chorus, accompanied by blows of hammer upon leather sole, is a never-ending source of wonder and delight to the visitor.

You come first on the basket-makers, some seated at long trestle tables, others on the ground with their baskets between their knees. Sighted superintendents are in charge of the department, but the instructors here, and throughout the building, are blind men, expert at the trade they are teaching, or blinded soldiers who have already completed their course and who have been promoted to salaried posts as pupil teachers. But the work proceeds smoothly, the men get over the first stage of clumsy beginning so quickly, that to the spectator the place has the aspect of a busy factory rather than that of a training centre. As you watch the dexterous movements of the hands, as you see the confident way in which the men find the materials and the implements they require, as the baskets grow under your eyes, strongly made and perfectly shaped, you forget that the workers are

blind as the men themselves have chosen to forget the fact. Are not these men proving to you that they are not blind but can see, though not in the way you see? Is there any sign of affliction here? Are these "poor blind men," moving you to pity, or are they capable workmen doing a normal man's work? If there is anything abnormal about them, surely it is their cheerfulness!

Or watch the mat-makers at their frames, which line both sides of one of the wings of the building. Or the cobblers putting soles or heels to boots, doing all sorts of repairs. Or, in the third wing, the joiners at work on picture frames, trays and cabinets and big solid pieces of furniture.

A few months ago these men were being carried back from the Front helpless—conceive the courage that has brought them, in this short space of time, to their present state, imagine the sheer grit by which difficulty after difficulty has been conquered. And know that hundreds of men who have been through these workshops are already established in business, earning splendidly substantial additions to their pensions.

Basket-making and mat-making are old-established industries for the blind. Boot-repairing, although not hitherto absolutely unknown to the blind world, was very little followed until it was selected as one of the best occupations for our men. The joinery that is taught in the workshops is a new industry for blind folk—why I was led

to introduce it at St. Dunstan's will appear later.

Before leaving the workshops I will give you a typical instance of the way in which newcomers were persuaded that in spite of their feeling of helplessness there was something for which they were fitted. The case was that of a young Colonial who did not believe he could do any of the trades we taught. I asked him what he had done before. He said he had been a butcher. Then said I to him: "You have a ready-made job. You are accustomed to handling tools, to using saws and knives; carpentering is the very thing for you."

"Why, yes, sir," he said, brightening up; "I think I could do that." And he became an absolutely first-rate carpenter. Butchering and carpentry have, of course, nothing to do with one another, but there was the opportunity of putting an idea into the lad's head—he simply wanted something to make him feel that he could do some useful work. Once a blinded soldier felt that he had been set to a task which he could tackle he went forward with a spirit that was absolutely undefeatable.

The remaining industry that we teach at St. Dunstan's will seem to people who do not understand the curious capacity of the blind man impossible for him to manage. It is poultry-farming.

Our country-life section lies behind the workshops—you pass a shed where rough carpentry is being taught, the making of nesting boxes, coops

and other things useful on a little poultry-farm, and come to model chicken-runs, incubators, houses and lecture-rooms. It is a remarkable sight to watch the blind men handling the chickens, distinguishing the different breeds by the sense of touch, judging the quality of eggs, selecting the different foodstuffs. We will come back to this in another chapter.

From the poultry-farm, the workshops, the class-rooms, there is a sudden rush of cheery fellows; some find their way to the house alone, regardless of guide-rails; others, finding a leader, place their hands on the shoulder of the man in front of them, and so in a long chain move along without the trouble of any but the first link in it thinking their way. Or you may see a newcomer steering a slow and safe course along the hand-rails.

We come back to the lawns in front of the house. Already the chairs have been removed, for this summer morning a dance is to be held there. The band of the Royal Horse Guards or one of the other crack military bands which come regularly to St. Dunstan's has taken up its place, securing advantage of what little shade the giant mulberry tree affords at one corner of the lawn. Besides the V.A.D.'s and other helpers, a sprinkling of visitors is here to dance with the men. And now it is the girls who must seek their partners. Among the soldiers are many who are excellent

dancers, and as I picture the scene it is one you will not easily forget. You have the clear blueness of the sky, the gold-green of the turf; the white caps and the red-crossed aprons of the V.A.D.'s are the very costumes to give picturesqueness to this *al fresco* dance. The music sets gaiety in motion, and though the men may picture the scene in many different ways, their enjoyment is at the one high level.

A dance such as I have depicted symbolised happily enough the spirit of St. Dunstan's; what you saw in the class-rooms and the workshops would have been incomplete without this. It was no special occasion of festivity—none but regular helpers were there—the ordinary life of the place went on quite unconcerned. There occurred a constant succession of events, not merely to bring gaiety to the lives of the blinded men, but to draw out their powers of enjoyment. To instruct them in practical accomplishments was a very important part of our work, but it was not everything. My plan went far beyond that. Indeed it seemed to me that the blinded man required more encouragement in the direction of play than in that of work.

At one o'clock the bell rings for dinner. From the garden the men find their way back to their respective dining-rooms.

Work does not recommence till 2.30. In the interval the lounges of the House—as the original

St. Dunstan's came to be called—and of the various annexes fill up with men engaged in all kinds of ways,—some reading Braille, others being read to, some writing letters on typewriters, some working at their netting, or playing dominoes, and though we have many musicians the piano has an irresistible attraction for the man who with one finger picks out the semblance of a tune.

Often in this interval a concert is given, or a lecture. The programmes of these concerts and entertainments make really an astonishing collection, and the greatest and most popular performers have never been too busy to find an occasion to come to St. Dunstan's.

There is a great deal more to be seen—the dispensary, the Tobacco store, the buildings devoted to the Pensions Department, the Settlement and the After-Care Departments, the Secretary's offices where, with the help of a large staff, an immense correspondence is conducted, and the men's dormitories.

A very well-known business man who visited St. Dunstan's told me afterwards that the place left upon him the same impression as he had often received after going over a large, well-managed and prosperous business establishment.

Well, St. Dunstan's was a business establishment, and a large one too. Its business was the unusual one of making normal careers out of material which a great many people might quite

wrongly suppose was not of a very promising nature. And the wonderfully good reports that continue to come to me regarding the lives of the men who have been there prove beyond question that it was prosperous. As to the excellence of its management I, perhaps, should not be the person to speak.

And as you explore this Kingdom of the Blind, as you see more of the men at work and at play, you come to lose more and more the impression that you are among people different in any way from yourself.

Let me relate an incident which in an interesting way emphasises this point.

A blinded soldier arrived one day from hospital and, like all newcomers, was taken over the building, through the class-rooms, the workshops and the grounds. On his return I asked him whether he had been happily impressed. He answered: "Yes, sir, only I cannot believe that all these men are blind." This man, himself unable to see, had yet gained such an impression of the cheerfulness and the activity of the men he had encountered wandering in the garden or at their daily tasks that it seemed to him impossible that they were, as he was, blind.

Nor do visitors, as a rule, escape this sense of astonishment.

When at 4.30 regular work ends for the day you will still find a number of men lingering in the

workshops, too interested in their work to wish to stop. Others lose no time in changing into sweaters and shorts—you see them making their way through the garden to the lake for their afternoon's rowing. Those who like swimming form a party and are taken to the nearest baths. Many go out for walks, or to take tea with their friends.

And you are sure to be struck by the normal appearance of the men. Very generally people are apt to think that if a man is blind he must necessarily be untidy. He very often is. But as St. Dunstaners know, I attach the greatest importance to tidiness and smartness. A blind man, by being smartly turned out, removes to a great extent any hasty impression that he is unlike the majority of his fellows.

Not till eight o'clock will the men reassemble for supper—and then with readings, with games and with music the evening will pass until bedtime. But of the amusements as of the work of St. Dunstan's I shall later write in detail; my concern now is to give no more than a general impression.

Yet I should be a poor guide if I did not detain you in the garden long enough to tell you what all visitors like to hear, that the house of St. Dunstan's was built in the Regency days by the third Marquis of Hertford, the wicked Marquis of Steyne in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair." It is told how he erected the house, paying no regard to

expense, for the sole purpose of entertaining his numerous friends. It was built in instalments, being then, as now, enlarged from time to time, as the claims on its hospitality grew. The designer was the famous architect, Decimus Burton. The portico is adapted from the Temple of the Winds at Athens; the roof is Venetian. With all the temporary additions the house affords no small test to the skill of the blinded soldiers in finding their way about.

The huge clock, projecting over the terrace, with the giant figures above, has an interesting history. It gave the name to the house, for it originally hung over Fleet Street from the church of St. Dunstan. The two life-sized figures, carved in wood, which struck the hours on the bells with clubs were one of the sights of London, and the Marquis of Hertford, seeing them as a child, longed to possess these giants that moved their heads when they delivered their blows. Later in life he was able to gratify the whim—for the old church was pulled down and, in 1830, he brought the clock and set it up in its present position. The removal of this ancient landmark from the City, we are told, drew tears from Charles Lamb's eyes.

As for St. Dunstan, who has become the Patron Saint of the Blinded Soldiers and Sailors, he lived nearly a thousand years ago and from humble beginnings rose to be Abbot of Glastonbury and Archbishop of Canterbury. He ordained that ev-

ery priest in England should learn a simple trade in order that he might instruct those who were incapacitated from following one of the vigorous outdoor employments which were then the usual means of gaining a livelihood. Legend relates that the Devil once appeared and tempted him, whereupon the prelate seized a pair of pincers and tweaked the nose of his Satanic Majesty so shrewdly that he fled in howling dismay. The St. Dunstan of to-day banishes with equal promptitude the devils of despair, hopelessness and apathy. He also bids his assistants teach simple and remunerative trades to those who are apparently incapacitated. Indeed, it seems to me a singular freak of Fortune that our Home should, long before we inhabited it, have been given a name which has turned out to be so appropriate.

Now I have taken you through St. Dunstan's. I have shown you something of its people, something of their lives. As we walk through the garden let us stop a moment and sit down on the white seat under the great mulberry tree at the corner of the terrace-lawn. There on this summer evening we hear the happy, cheery voices of the men walking about together or with their friends, we hear the merry laughter of the rowers running back from the lake, we hear the cheery competition of the men engaged in various forms of sport about the lawns and fields, we hear, in short, every sound that betokens a busy, happy place. If you

look on the back of the seat as you rise from it you will see these words are written there:

"The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
You are nearer to God in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth."

And I believe you will agree with me that this is very, very true of the garden of St. Dunstan's.

CHAPTER III

THE NEWCOMER

To the newly-blinded soldier, lying in his cot at hospital, the little sketch I have given of the active and joyous life at St. Dunstan's presented itself as a picture of unimagined possibilities, of an astonishing future suddenly opening out before him.

At the moment when he began to realise most acutely the blow that had befallen him he heard of the very marvellous accomplishments of comrades who, like himself, had lost their sight. He heard of men who, less than twelve months before, were lying in that same hospital, depressed with the same sense of overwhelming darkness, who were already set up in a business of their own, perhaps newly-married, who, apart from their pensions, were earning their own living by the work of their hands, men who instead of bemoaning their fate were with astonishing courage developing new powers to take the place of the sense they had lost, and finding life still very well worth living.

The majority of our blinded soldiers were quite young men, still at the beginning of life's adven-

ture, and it requires no imagination to realise their horror of helplessness and their terror at the thought of an existence shut off from ordinary activities and enjoyments. They responded at once to the encouraging prospect that, in spite of all, they would be able to play a man's part in the world. And with that new outlook everything was changed for them.

Thus the work of St. Dunstan's began at the hospital.

I have already explained how, so far as possible, it was arranged that all the blinded men should go to the 2nd London General Hospital in Chelsea.

At least once a week it was my practice to visit the hospital, to see especially the men who had newly arrived. I felt that because I, too, was blind I might speak to these men of their future more convincingly than if I had not shared the same experience and faced the same problems. I knew, too, what others had gone through before them—their fears, their uncertainties, their varying moods; and to give examples of how these had been overcome, to relate the history of men, perhaps from their own regiments, who had had the same feelings of despondency, the same doubts, and were now capable, happy and prosperous, was to find a way that seldom failed to establish at once a brighter outlook.

However, to hear what other people can do and have done is not everything. The least personal

experience counts for more. For that reason I always presented each new arrival with a watch —a watch specially made for the use of the blind, with dots to indicate the place of the ordinary numerals and hands slightly raised, and so strong that their position can be safely felt with the fingers.

In the ordinary way, the blind man lying in the hospital ward would constantly ask what the time was—for the day, like the night, passes in darkness not too quickly.

Now, when for the first time he held in his hand a watch by which he could tell the hour, he was delighted, and he was still more delighted to find that he was able to do something like other people, which blindness had seemed to prevent. It was a little discovery that, like a spark, set alight all kinds of hopes. He took an extraordinary pleasure in letting his fingers succeed in this way where before he had only trusted his eyes. He began to realise that his hands were going to be of amazing use to him; what he had heard of the accomplishments of blind men seemed suddenly much more possible.

Certain members of the staff of St. Dunstan's were constantly at the hospital, to read to the men, to write letters for them or to help them to write their own, to take them out when well enough. To begin their education as blind men they would learn string bag-making, commence the

study of Braille, and discover that to use a typewriter was nothing beyond their powers. It happened that men who often had been at St. Dunstan's and had made considerable progress in their work returned for some further medical treatment in hospital, and the presence of these men in the wards had on the others a wonderfully stimulating influence.

My own visits were supplemented by regular calls from Captain Frazer, who had been placed in charge of the After-Care Department and so was in constant touch with all the men who had been already set up in business. St. Dunstan's had always provided hospitality during the visits to London of the immediate relatives of the men, and, having seen for themselves what a few months' training was able to do for the blinded soldiers, these relatives were able to bring further encouragement and resolution to the men in the wards.

I have said that the blinded men responded quickly to the new hopes that were held out to them, but this response did not always immediately go so far as to remove the natural antipathy to undergoing a course of instruction. The men had their pensions to fall back on, and most of them had homes to go to and relations to look after them.

I had sometimes to insist that a newly-blinded

man's worst enemy was apt to be his own loving wife, or mother or sister.

For now and then it had happened that the natural yearning to have the blinded man under their care had not yielded to the argument that before anything else he must learn to be blind, but in the end these men came to St. Dunstan's and discovered with amazement the difference between themselves and others who had been at the same time in hospital, and who had not wasted precious weeks at home. For the tender desire to wait on a blinded man, to do everything for him to remove all difficulties from his path, has the effect of preventing him from making the wonderful discovery of all he can do for himself. It retards the development of his powers, and by degrees the very desire to be self-reliant must needs begin to diminish. I have dwelt on the work in hospital because without it we could scarcely have accomplished what has been done. Practically all the men of the British Imperial Forces who have been blinded in the war have come to St. Dunstan's and have learned to overcome their handicap.

Nor did most of the blinded men come to St. Dunstan's as to a strange place known only by repute. Once a week a party of men were driven from hospital to Regent's Park to see (it is the word we like to use) *to see* for themselves the life of the Hostel. They were taken round the class-rooms and workshops, they dined with the

men, attended one of the regular concerts, and so came to know that when they were discharged from hospital they might learn to be blind in a way that involved the least possible amount of drudgery and the greatest possible amount of freedom, enjoyment and success.

All the same, the moment of leaving hospital was always a testing time for the men. Not until then had they faced realities in quite the same way. It was like the day when the emigrant's ship arrived in port and from the hopeful dreams of the voyage he had to turn to actual experience and to face the first practical steps towards making a start in a new world.

But St. Dunstan's was always ready with a special welcome for the new arrival. At the front door he found some one to receive him. He was taken in charge by a V.A.D., and when the Secretary had settled his house and ward, when the Matron had shown him round the place and introduced him to the men in the lounge, then very quickly was the feeling of being at home established.

Having formally entered St. Dunstan's, the men usually went at once for a period of rest either to their own homes or to one of our country or seaside resorts. But before leaving each one came to my room for a talk. Some hours of each day I always kept free for these interviews and for

interviews with any of the men in residence who wanted advice, or with their relatives.

And these talks, especially with the new arrivals, I always regarded as the most important part of that portion of my work which did not deal with actual administration. It is because the men of St. Dunstan's have adopted one view about blindness, because they have accepted one guiding principle—a resolute disregard of what is lost and a cheerful pursuit of all that may take its place—because they have followed broadly one line of conduct, that they have come to form a fraternity with an enduring bond of interest and a surprisingly uniform standard of achievement.

But a result such as this is never attained by a formal code, by rules, or even by lectures. It must arise from the spontaneous response of each individual to an influence that appeals to his nature. In the spirit of St. Dunstan's there existed such an influence, and from the first my object was to establish this definite point of view through my talks with the men.

We had our rules at St. Dunstan's, of course, but the place was a guest-house, not an institution, and it was largely the men themselves who maintained the necessary discipline, jealous of the good name of the place they had learnt to love.

And here I would like to quote both something that has been written about the spirit of St. Dunstan's and a little sketch of the interview which

was the experience of every newcomer. I must leave it to the indulgence of the reader to extricate me from the difficulty that while these quotations help to complete the record of St. Dunstan's, they inevitably contain some personal references which would not otherwise appear in a book under one's own name.

"Philanthropy," wrote Mr. Richard King Huskinson, "worked in the right spirit of love and encouragement and not patronage and institutional discipline, can achieve anything, even in the face of difficulties that many people would consider almost insurmountable. With love and encouragement you can lead ninety-eight per cent. of free men anywhere; discipline, merely as discipline, will not drive them a yard. It is the spirit of St. Dunstan's which has helped as much as the practical work to make the place all that it means in hope and enthusiasm and achievement in the blinded soldiers' and sailors' work. From the very beginning of St. Dunstan's Sir Arthur Pearson has treated the men of St. Dunstan's as if they really were men and not as if they were mostly naughty, and nearly always ungrateful children. Briefly he has treated the men as all men should treat one another—with friendship and encouragement, with the good cheer of one man towards other men. It is this feeling of sincere friendship and good cheer which was the early spirit of St. Dunstan's, and has never left it. It is the only

spirit by which such a work of mental and physical, as well as practical, reconstruction can possibly be successful. It is what I will call the 'simple human touch' which has made of St. Dunstan's not only a place wherein the blinded soldier and sailor are taught independence and self-reliance, but a place which the vast majority look upon as 'home.' Such was the early spirit of the place that the blinded men worked, not altogether for the benefit of their own future, but for love of, and in gratitude to, the place itself.

"The blinded soldier who can be made to laugh and keep on laughing is the blinded soldier whose future will be worth living, who will face the inevitable with that courage and cheerfulness which make one bow one's head in admiration, often in shame. Cheerfulness, hopefulness, manliness, these are the three things of the spirit that come to the blinded soldier or sailor during his sojourn at St. Dunstan's. It is the real spirit of the place."

Of my talks with the men a visitor has given this impression:

"At noon the waiting-room at St. Dunstan's presents the appearance of the waiting-room of some busy consulting physician. And such, indeed, it is, though what these people are waiting for is to have gloom and doubts dispelled. Here are the relatives of blinded soldiers, and blinded men newly arrived from hospital, taking their first independent step in the world of darkness,

feeling lost in the impenetrable shadows that surround them, more doubtful than at any other time as to whether their courage will support them in the effort to re-establish a sense of normal life.

"These men, whose first day it is at St. Dunstan's, already know Sir Arthur. He has visited them in hospital, and there, in his cheerful, confident way, has begun to interest them in the difficulties which have to be swept aside, has imparted to them something of his own preterhuman energy, his vehement belief in the blinded man's power to regain his independence.

"But it is exactly at this moment of first experience that the spirit of confidence needs to be fostered.

"This interview between Sir Arthur and the man who has just left hospital is one on which it may be said everything depends. The hopes already awakened have now to be proved, and the man on the point of setting out on his voyage through the endless night must be given, instead of his lingering depression, his inevitable fears, a firm sense of interest, of expectation and even of adventure.

"Sir Arthur, blind himself, has access to the confidence of these blinded men, and it is an exacting feature of his work that it is essentially personal and cannot in any sense be delegated to others.

"His room at St. Dunstan's is a large one with

high windows opening on to the grounds. There is a big sofa near the fireplace, a writing desk on which stands the telephone, a long central table. Against the wall, quite close to the door, is another sofa, and it is here that the men sit while they talk with him.

"A guide leads in the blinded soldier and he finds Sir Arthur standing to welcome him; somehow or other the hands of the two blind men meet. Sitting on the sofa, still holding the hand of his visitor, Sir Arthur begins at once to talk of the future.

"No one can understand the power that one man has over another. If you were present at one of these interviews, if you attempted to analyse Sir Arthur's secret, you would probably say that he took it for granted that the blinded man was going to make a success of being blind. In a word, the man finds himself swept along by Sir Arthur's unfaltering convictions; he has no time to say that he doubts his powers, no time to break down in expressing his sense of helplessness,—this man who has hardly entered the room before he is discussing whether in twelve months' time he shall be the working-owner of a cobbler's shop, or a poultry farmer, set up on his own little estate, or making such an income as he has never made before as a skilled masseur. There are other things to engage his interest. This man who was perhaps a coal miner finds himself discussing how soon he

may be able to pass the test that will make him the possessor of a typewriter, whether he would like to take up rowing as a recreation, whether he has a turn for speaking and would like to join the debating club. He notices he is being talked to just as if he were not blind at all, or at all events as if the loss of sight were not going to stand in the way of anything that he sought. He begins to think of himself as in the old days.

"And you see the change in the man taking place, you hear a new tone in his voice—he has been carried over the dead point and you realise that there will be no going back in his mind.

"As for sympathy, it has been expressed by the touch of the hand resting on his, by Sir Arthur's genuine interest in his affairs. Eyes are not needed to catch the deep feeling under the brisk, confident tone in which everything has been said. The man knows that all is understood—this more than anything else makes a cheerful discussion of the future reassuring. The sense of assurance is what, above all, is requisite. He finds himself laughing at difficulties, in better spirits, one would judge, than he had experienced since he was wounded. These interviews do not last very long, but they are very momentous, and he is an exceptional man who does not leave the room not merely with a determination to make a success of his life, but with a new-found confidence that he can do so.

"The tone of these interviews is the keynote to

the success of St. Dunstan's. There are people who have studiously refrained from visiting the Hostel for fear of the sadness with which they believe such a visit would fill them. They little imagine the influence of the cheerful acceptance of blindness.

"It is because the atmosphere of St. Dunstan's is so brimful of vitality and of happiness that Sir Arthur's interviews with the relatives of the blinded men are perhaps less trying than they might be. Yet it often happens that the relatives have more need of a consoler than the blind men themselves. And whatever may be said to them in the way of understanding and sympathy, nothing could be so healing as a visit to the workshops or a seat in the dining-room when the men assemble for dinner. Yes, it is to them one may turn for a new sense of happiness; it is as if they had really discovered that to overcome difficulties is to experience the full delight of existence."

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING TO BE BLIND

I HAVE said that the blinded soldiers came to St. Dunstan's to learn to be blind.

Now, the first step in this tuition is to acquire the will to overcome blindness in every possible way and to approach, as near as may be, to a perfectly normal life. And this cannot be done without determination to leave depression behind and to adopt a cheerful mental outlook. This attitude is easy to talk about but difficult to practise. Nevertheless it is essential both for the effect on the man's own powers and because of its influence on those with whom he comes in contact. It does not matter how self-reliant a blind man may become, he must always be, in some measure, dependent on others. For the blind man there is unlimited sympathy—wherever he goes he finds a sense of extra consideration. But in all companionship he feels the need also of extra brightness. He requires the stimulus of that; and it must be remembered how the odd moments which others occupy in some trivial way can by the blind man be spent only in reflection. Thus, unless he is of a naturally

solitary disposition, he comes to depend a great deal on others to help pass the time—and the willingness to afford this attention, the spirit in which it is given, must in the end be influenced by what is offered in return. "I am merry," said Cowper, "in order that I may decoy people into my company," and it is no bad line to remember.

But the blinded soldier, having determined to get the greatest amount of pleasure and success out of life, has to begin to face certain obvious difficulties.

Sight is usually called the most precious of the senses. That it is, and more. It is the ruler of the senses; and so strictly does it dominate over them that hearing, smell, and touch are but little called upon while sight exists. Only so, however, when civilisation has helped to suppress the usefulness of the other servants of the brain. The savage hears, smells and feels his way through the trackless forests in the dark and helps himself to find his route by the exercise of the senses of direction and obstacles which have long ago been forgotten by the man who lives in settled lands. Forgotten though they may be, they are possessed by every human being. To some who lose their sight they come slowly, to some quickly, to a few scarcely at all. The sense of obstacle gives warning when a solid object is approached. On a soft surface which yields no echo to the footfall the solid object is, as a rule, unnoticed if it be not at

least breast high. If the surface walked upon yields an echo, the solid object will be discernible even if it be no higher than the knee. The impression of obstacles obtained when on a soft unechoing surface is derived from a combination of causes. Some degree of echo is often one of these, alteration of atmospheric pressure is another, and change of temperature, caused by a cooler or a warmer surface, may be yet another.

The thinner the object, the more difficult it is to discern it. A lamp-post out of doors, and the edge of a door indoors, are typically difficult objects to sense. It is only practice that makes perfect. And courage in the matter of taking one's knocks is also a point of much importance. The new faculties that enable a blinded man to avoid obstacles do not come immediately; they are a matter of growth more or less rapid, according to the temperament of the individual.

"We depend," says a very competent blind friend of mine, "on the extraordinary sensitiveness of the nerves of the face." The natural sensitiveness of these nerves can easily be demonstrated by holding an object a few inches in front of the face of a totally blind person without previously warning him. He instantly becomes aware of its presence, though there may be absolutely no sound. By the exercise and cultivation of this sense, a man can walk parallel to a wall or fence at a distance of several feet, becoming at once

aware of the fact if he for a moment lessens or increases the distance between himself and it. At first this requires a good deal of concentrated attention, but very soon it becomes a matter of second nature, and requires practically no attention at all. In this way, stationary objects can easily be sensed and avoided when hearing would be quite useless. By degrees the newly-blinded man finds his other senses taking the place of sight in a hundred ways; we who cannot see in the ordinarily accepted meaning of the word still see in our own fashion with those portions of our brains which respond to impulses given by the other senses.

One day at St. Dunstan's I heard a newcomer speak rather grumpily to some one who had asked him whether he wanted to *see* So-and-so. He said, "You don't suppose I should be here if I could see, do you?"

Now, this, as I told him, was quite the wrong point of view. When I first lost my sight I was always very careful to speak of *meeting* people and of having things read to me. But as the true meaning of the verb "to see" impressed itself upon me, I once more got into the way of talking about *reading* my letters and *seeing* my friends.

For a blind man to twist phrases unnecessarily is to emphasise a difference between himself and others and to suggest a susceptibility which should not really exist. Blind people do not want to be

spoken to in guarded phrases, but simply and naturally, and people are much more at their ease if they can talk of "seeing" a person or "reading" an item of news in the paper.

Besides, as touch, hearing, and the sense of smell become more and more effective they habitually create mental pictures. It is one thing for a blind man to be able to pick out the tie he wishes to wear by touch, to recognise a bird by its song, or to distinguish a flower by its scent—it is another to see in the mind's eye the very blossom, to perceive the bird in its varied plumage, to think instinctively of the tie as a thing of definite shape and colour.

To visualise a room in which you are sitting, or a scene through which you are passing, is to increase your enjoyment and often to make more easy your movements. Moreover, if you picture to yourself one to whom you are talking you instinctively turn towards him in a way that is natural, and not to do this is to suggest singularity and often to create an awkward feeling. Little things count a great deal when a blind man wishes to take his place as naturally as possible with others—as, for instance, the poise of the head when eating, a poise which becomes instinctive, if the table and the plate are mentally seen.

People with sight often expressed surprise at the ease and dexterity with which the men of St. Dunstan's comported themselves at table. To

feed oneself without the aid of vision in a manner that is neither awkward nor ugly is merely a question of touch. It is true that the ends of knives and forks are not as sensitive as are the ends of one's fingers, but practice soon gives the necessary degree of delicacy, and the newly-blinded man quickly finds himself recognising the difference between various eatables and conveying them to the mouth in a quite ordinary manner.

As a rule people who do not see are far too apt to allow their food to drift to the edges of their plates, or often deliberately to divert it there, believing that the raised edge will help them. To do this is very apt to lead to the depositing of food on the table-cloth, with dire results from the point of view of the housewife, especially if the food is moist or greasy. I always take particular care to keep my food as much as possible away from the edges of my plate, and continually collect it in the middle by gentle movements of knife, fork or spoon. I think it far easier to load one's fork up with the help of a knife from the middle of the plate than it is to try to do so with the help of the raised edge. Some blind people get into a very bad habit of continuously tapping on their plates with their knife, fork, or spoon to find whether there is anything left uneaten on them. It is just as easy to make this discovery by passing the implement over the surface of the plate. One blind man whom I know is really a positive nuisance at

meals, owing to the incessant tap-tapping of the blade of his knife or the edge of his spoon on the plate. Another useful little table tip is always to pass your knife under your fork when you have cut off a piece of meat or anything else which wants cutting, and are about to convey it to your mouth. One is apt to do the cutting incompletely, with the result that the fork not only lifts the piece one wishes to eat, but trails another larger or smaller piece behind it. One very soon gets into the habit of automatically and quite unostentatiously passing one's knife under one's loaded fork as one lifts it from the plate, and if a blind person will adopt this plan I think he will find a good many awkward situations avoided.

Yet another table tip. A blind person should be careful, after having had a drink, not to put his glass upon the blade of a knife which is waiting for the next course. One is quite apt to do this, and a very likely result is that as you pick up your knife over goes the glass. Particularly may this happen with a long-stemmed wine-glass. I once had the mortification of upsetting a glass of wine over the lap of a lady who was seated next to me. It was bad for her dress but good for me, for I do not think I have ever put a glass down on a knife-blade since.

I always advised the blinded men when they met strangers to form a definite picture of them. From the grasp of the hand, the sound of the

voice, the tenor even of the conversation an image can be formed—just as the hero or heroine of a book becomes real to the imaginative reader—so much so that very often an illustration proves an actual annoyance if it happens that the artist has drawn quite a different picture from the one the reader has formed.

The blind man's conception of a stranger may be incorrect, but it is better than having none at all. It may have to be modified by subsequent descriptions—the hair may be dark instead of fair, the eyes black instead of blue, the face ruddy instead of pale, and yet not uncommonly blind men keep always to their first impressions, and where it comes to the expression of a face and to character, it would be interesting to know whether the mental pictures do not often catch something that might escape ordinary observers—just as a great portrait-painter emphasises a certain expression, the very soul of a man or a woman, producing a true likeness that may be considered unfaithful by nine critics out of ten who behold it.

To dress himself, to shave and perform other toilet operations, becomes perfectly simple to the blind man who takes pains to get himself back into normal ways. I have frequently been congratulated upon the skill with which my valet ties my bow tie. But I have to take the compliment to myself. My valet neither ties my tie nor does anything else for me, the very simple reason being

that I have no valet. When I found my sight was doomed I arrived at various decisions of greater and lesser importance, and one of the lesser ones was that I had better dispense with the services of the personal attendant who had looked after me for many years, as otherwise he would probably become a stumbling-block in the path of blind proficiency. The great secret of success in learning to be blind is to insist upon doing everything possible for oneself.

Here is a little experience that I often used to illustrate this point when talking to St. Dunstan's men. It is an odd example of the manner in which many blind people fail in some way to be normal. An acquaintance brought to see me one evening before dinner a friend of his who had lost his sight in childhood. Some sherry was brought in; I poured out a glass and took it to him.

He said, "Did I notice that you poured the wine out yourself?"

I said, "Certainly, why not?"

"Well," he replied, "I have been blind for a great many years and have never poured out a glass of wine for myself."

I replied: "My dear fellow—surely it is only because you never tried."

To which he answered: "Well, I suppose it is." And there ended a very trifling but to me very illuminating little incident.

I often said to the blinded soldiers, "Blind

people will never do anything to help themselves unless they try. Attempt everything that it is in the least possible for you to do. You will, of course, have your difficulties to overcome, and you may have to own to a failure here and there, but on the whole I know you will find, as I have found, that loss of sight is to a surprisingly small degree a bar in the matter of conducting oneself in ordinary life just as people who can see conduct themselves."

One of the first things that a newly-blinded man has to learn is to find his way about indoors. I have already spoken of the linoleum paths in the rooms of St. Dunstan's; these were a help for the beginner; necessary, in fact, in a place that was crowded. But in his own home or in a house familiar to him the blinded man should soon be able to walk about with perfect assurance.

The natural tendency to advance gropingly with outstretched hands was quickly overcome in most cases, especially as the sense of obstacle developed. And this was true also of the inclination to shuffle. I believe in using the sole of one's boot to help in discovering where one is when necessity arises, but the habit of always dragging the foot along the floor is a bad one, easy to get into, difficult to get out of. It gives to the walker an air of hesitation and of indecision and, generally speaking, tends to do away with the freedom of movement which I always regard as a possession

of the greatest importance to a blind man. For the same reason I discouraged the men from using a stick indoors.

"Hasten slowly" is one of the world's well-known maxims; it is particularly to be laid to heart by people who have lost their sight. I do not believe in people dawdling or loafing, but I do hold that those who cannot see as well as others should begin by doing things, particularly moving about, slowly and deliberately. It may take a good many hard knocks to convince one of this, but once the lesson has been learned one gains confidence, and with confidence comes a normal degree of speed combined with safety.

It is very important that in a house frequented by a blind person the furniture should always occupy the same position, and that everything should be tidy. To leave about small objects, such as stools, or to move chairs from one place to another, is bound to be the cause of trouble. Nothing is more apt to destroy growing confidence in moving about than suddenly to find some regular landmark missing or to collide with a piece of furniture which is not in the position it usually occupies. In the same way, it is aggravating to find that things on one's dressing-table have been "tidied" so that you can no longer put your hand on anything you may want.

In going up or down stairs no assistance is needed beyond that given by the banister, which

is nearly always so constructed that the shape gives all the indication needed with regard to where the steps begin and end. In developing independence there must always be care to avoid such reckless habits as going downstairs with both hands in the pockets. One never can be perfectly certain that there is not some pitfall in the way, a loose stair-rod, for instance. A fall downstairs is bad enough even when the hands are free.

Blind people find that they are often warned of things that do not matter in the least, while they are left totally unwarned of things that do matter a great deal. I remember very well an instance of this which happened soon after my sight finally went. I was dining at a house where the drawing-room was on the first floor and the dining-room on the ground floor. I took my hostess down to dinner and as we approached the drawing-room door she said, "Now be very careful, we are just coming to a mat." The mat in question was a very thin one which really would have required a lot of finding. She then led me straight off the top of the stairs without a word of warning, and had I not been following my usual practice of holding my shoulders well back when I am not sure of my position in regard to steps, we should certainly both have gone downstairs with more speed than dignity. Since then I have always advised newly-blind people to hold themselves very upright when they are nearing steps. If you are

leaning forward when you come suddenly to steps you are very apt to plunge down them headlong.

In an unfamiliar room the position of a chair or a sofa should be indicated to a blind man by placing his hand upon the back—most carefully should be avoided any attempt to push him into the proper position. Nor should a blind man when alone ever assume that he can safely sit down because he has felt with his hand the arm of a seat. By the touch of the legs he must make sure that the seat is behind him. This use of the legs is a very important habit to acquire. A great many blind people get firmly rooted in the way of stooping over and feeling for a seat before they sit on it, a quite unnecessary habit and one that gives to the onlooker an impression of helplessness. One can easily get into the way of touching the edge of the seat with one's calves, and making sure of the position of a fender, for instance, by a touch with the toe that passes almost unnoticed.

To count the number of steps necessary in crossing a room or walking along a passage is at first a help, though familiarity should soon render this unnecessary. Often when moving about a house a creaking board—and it is curious for a newly-blinded person to find how faithfully a board creaks—will give all the indication that is needed. A clock with a good, sensible tick is a great help in enabling one to locate one's exact position in a room and to move about it with ease

and accuracy. By following its unostentatious signalling the blind man finds himself moving about a room in a way that occasions surprise to people who do not realise the help given by that little guide on the mantelpiece. In winter time the crackle of a fire may give a hint of direction. For the rest, the lightest touch on walls or pieces of furniture enables the blind man to know just where he is.

All the same, blind people must be constantly on their guard. They, more than any one else, must think what they are doing. Thus if one drops anything on the floor one is apt to stoop down quickly to pick it up, and perhaps because of the direction of the sound to turn slightly before stooping, and should one happen to be near a chair or a table a nasty blow in the face may result. Unless quite sure of one's position it is always a good plan to hold a hand before the face when stooping.

There is one thing that might be remembered by those who can see, and that is to speak when they enter a room where a blind man is—for the least word from a familiar voice is all the indication he needs as to who has come in, but without this he is left in doubt.

Similarly, when a group of people, including one or more who are blind, are engaged in conversation its seeing members should always, when within reach, lightly touch a blind man when ad-

dressing him, if they do not mention his name, thus making up for the turned face and quick glance which form conventional signals between those who can see.

Just as getting about indoors was made easy for the newcomer at St. Dunstan's by the linoleum paths, so getting about in the grounds was simplified by the system of hand-rails—though, as I have already said, the men very soon came to ignore these. Beyond home surroundings new problems arise.

In general, a newly-blinded man soon gets to find his way easily enough about a limited district which becomes familiar—how far it is wise to venture at hazard into new streets is a very debatable point. Pitfalls made by pavement repairs, open coal-traps, bicycles leaning against railings, ladders sloping up from roadway to window, are some of the many dangers which the blind solitary pedestrian may encounter. Old hands become surprisingly expert in sensing and avoiding these and similar dangers. In this as in everything else, it is only practice that can make perfect, and a blind man must either make up his mind to take risks, and by encountering them learn to avoid them, or must eschew solitary walks in unfamiliar places.

And now about the use of a walking-stick. Not long after my sight went I gave up the use of one unless I was walking by myself in a place I did

not know well or was going with some one for a tramp over rough country with ditches and other obstacles to negotiate. I am quite sure that I got along much better without a stick than I did when I depended upon one. I walked more naturally, more freely, and felt more confident. The experience of the men of St. Dunstan's who accustomed themselves to this habit agreed with mine.

As a rule blind people carry heavy sticks. This is wrong. The stick should be regarded as an elongation of the arm, and the lighter it is the more useful it will prove. A heavy stick is all right for the blind beggar who wants to attract attention by lusty bangs on the pavement. To tap the ground at all is unnecessary; the stick, if used to help in guiding one, should be carried with the point in advance lightly touching the ground or just above it and perhaps moving from side to side. If one is walking with a wall, bank or paling on one side, occasional light sideway taps with a stick will keep the tyro in the proper position. If walking by the kerb, the stick can be used in the same way, touching the edge of the kerb; but the newly-blinded man must remember that lamp-posts usually stand on the edge of a pavement. Unless it is known that there are none about, the distance kept from the kerb must be great enough to avoid colliding with them. On the whole, the middle of the pavement is the safest place. The blinded man

soon is able to distinguish by his footfall whether he is passing over pavement, stone, asphalt, wood, gravel or macadam road, and in this way gains useful information as to his whereabouts. The curved surface of a garden path or a road serves to indicate whether he is in the middle or at one side.

The man beginning to find his way about should pay particular attention to this curve. I remember in my early days of blindness being surprised when a very expert blind man laughed at the idea of tripping over kerbs. His secret was the very simple one of observing the dip of the road. This dip is the rule with, I think, no exceptions. The walker will be astonished at his power to remember little details of the way that are of immense help—hearing of course assists him, and also the sense of smell.

I may mention a trifling experience of my own. At the time it happened I often went for a walk before breakfast—from my house to the end of the street. There were three side streets to be crossed, and one morning, just as I was passing one of them, I heard a cart approach. I slowed up, the cart stopped just in front of me, I walked round it and continued on my way. A few yards further on a friend overtook me. He said, "By Jove, it was wonderful to see the way you avoided that cart. I made sure you were going to run into it."

"Why?" said I.

"Because of its unusual length," was the reply.

"Well, now," I said, "think for a moment of what I had to do. When the cart stopped I knew that the horse was immediately in front of me, for I could hear him breathing. I smelt the smell of coal—so I knew it was a coal-cart, and therefore a long one, so I made a good wide detour, and here I am."

"Wonderful!" said my companion.

"Not at all," I replied. "With the aid of my hearing and smell I learnt what your sense of sight told you. We arrived at the same conclusions by different methods. That is all."

In the same way a friend with whom I was once walking home was very surprised when I stopped at the right house, which he had been led by our conversation to overshoot. My ear had detected the familiar sound of the slight echo resulting from the fact that the house has a porch, unlike that of any other near to it. He said that he thought it marvellous that I had been able to keep count of the number of steps from the last cross-road and at the same time continue our talk. I am not quite sure that he yet believes my simple explanation of the matter, for he himself was quite unable to detect the echo that had guided me.

A friend of mine who has been without sight for twenty-four years, and who is particularly expert in getting about alone, was able to give, in an ar-

ticle which he contributed to the *St. Dunstan's Review,* some very valuable hints to newcomers.

"It is extraordinary," he pointed out, "how useful the sense of smell may prove in getting about alone. In picking out a particular shop in a long row it is often the only guide. Almost every shop has its own distinctive smell which has been familiar to us from childhood, though we may never before have had reason to turn this familiarity to account.

"The crossing of busy thoroughfares must always remain a difficulty, but let us not scorn to seek the assistance of a passer-by. Thoroughfares of a less busy nature can easily be adventured alone. Particular dangers are the slow-going horse-drawn vehicle—moving so slowly that a man is tempted to cut across in front of it, forgetting that the noise it makes may cover the approach of a quiet, fast-travelling car—the bicycle, and the stationary vehicle drawn up by the side of the kerb. It is well to remember that it is always safest to cross the road in a leisurely manner and, if in a tight corner, to stand still and let the traffic avoid you."

CHAPTER V

SOME MORE HINTS ON LEARNING TO BE BLIND

ENOUGH has been said, I think, to show how the blind person can and does learn to get about alone. But in most cases when any distance has to be covered he is apt to be happier in the company of some one with sight, not only because more rapid progress can be made, but because the conversation enables him to visualise his surroundings, the most casual references helping to create those internal illustrations that take the place of actual scenes.

The men of St. Dunstan's never lacked companions for their walks, for either their own friends or men and women who were delighted to perform the service of escorts were always ready to take them out. I wrote at different times hints both for the escorts and for the men, and here I will reproduce some of these which may perhaps be considered of permanent value.

The commonest mistake which is made by kindly folk who want to help a blind person along is to believe that because he cannot see he cannot move without support. We folk who cannot see all

know the well-intentioned guide who seizes one forcibly by the arm and half supports, half pulls one about, using a little extra muscular vigour when steps have to be negotiated.

A guide should realise that all a blind man needs in the way of assistance is the gentlest directing pressure. A blind person when forcibly seized should always ask the guide to be good enough either to rest a hand on his arm or allow his own arm to be touched. I think it is the proper plan that a blind person should touch the arm of his guide when obstacles such as furniture in a room or rough places out of doors have to be negotiated, keeping slightly in the rear and gaining knowledge of what to do from the guide's own movements. In some cases, however, where sensitiveness of touch has not been acquired it is better for the guide to take the blind person by the arm under these conditions.

When going for a brisk walk it will at first be found the best plan to put one hand in a coat-pocket and let the guide's hand rest gently inside the arm. The guide and guided should keep step. The guide will be able by gentle pressure at precisely the right moment to give warning of a step up or down in such a way that the pace need not be slackened at all. If there are more steps than one the fact should be mentioned. Steps should be trodden squarely and not slantwise, as this is apt to lead to stumbling and the spraining of

ankles. The endeavour of the guide should be to enable the blind man to pursue his way freely and naturally, using his own initiative and perception to the greatest possible extent.

As a rule, walking arm-in-arm is continued after it has become unnecessary. I am very clear as to the great advantages of walking without any contact at all between the walkers. It is surprisingly easy to do this so long as the sighted pedestrian remembers to give warning by word or touch of any awkward obstacle. When walking along a fairly clear road it is perfectly easy to proceed without any open help from the guide, at first walking in such a way that elbows touch, and afterwards getting into the way of keeping in the proper position by the sense of hearing only.

It is well that walks should at first be taken in quiet places, where the noise of passers-by and wheeled traffic does not disturb movements which are still uncertain.

When a path traversed is not wide enough to allow of the passage of two people abreast, the blind person can very well follow his companion by the sound of his footsteps. When the pathway is winding or uneven, an excellent plan is to make use of a walking-stick. If the guide holds the stick in the right hand, the blind person should hold it in his right hand also, and *vice versa*, in order that the movements of the guide may be accurately transmitted to the guided and warn him

of changes of direction and inequalities of the road. After a little practice, a handkerchief, one corner held by the guide behind his back, the other corner held by the guided, will answer the same purpose as a stick.

The pleasure of a blind man's walk is increased in proportion to the alertness of his guide, the skill with which hints and directions are conveyed without breaking in abruptly on the conversation, and the care that is taken to speak naturally of anything worth noting by the way.

I would like to impress upon people who are about a good deal with those who cannot see the great importance of cultivating the powers of description. If a blind person is to reach the standard of normality at which he should aim, it is obvious that he must be very largely dependent upon the descriptions which he receives from those who are with him during his daily life. These descriptions may be of so meagre a nature as to leave him almost ignorant of the persons, scenes or things which they are intended to portray; or they may be so full and complete that he is able to conjure up a really accurate picture of what is described.

Of course there is a wide world of difference between these two extremes, but my own experience leads me to the belief that very few people indeed have a natural gift of describing what they see in terms which call up in the mind of the lis-

tener a really true picture. By this, I mean a picture true enough to enable the person to whom it has been given to convey it to some one else.

The knack of accurate description can be cultivated by almost every one. The great thing is to go enough into detail. For instance, when describing a person it is not sufficient to say that the hair is brown, the shade of brown should be given as nearly as may be. If possible, it is always a good plan to say that the feature which is being described is like one belonging to some one whom the listener knows.

And so with scenery. Always try to compare a scene with one with which the blind person to whom you are speaking is familiar. Almost invariably there are to be found some points of resemblance to already well-known people or places.

An escort, however efficient, will never object to a hint from the blind person escorted, and I think it is a great mistake to be afraid of hurting the feelings of one's escort by making suggestions. I always ask any one with whom I am walking to let me know if we are about to meet some one whom the escort knows to be a friend or an acquaintance of mine. This saves the awkwardness of being suddenly spoken to by a person of whose identity one is not certain. Again, it enables one to take off one's hat to a lady whom one is passing, and generally to conduct oneself in an ordinary and normal manner.

Walking competitions were organised at St. Dunstan's—a prize being given to the man who followed the straightest line to a point where a whistle was sounded.

The men varied, of course, very much in the skill they developed in this matter of getting about, but most of them were more apt to be rash than wanting in the spirit of adventure. They usually took their adverse experiences with the utmost good humour.

Here is an interesting experience of one of the St. Dunstan's men in a fog, given in his own words:

"In one of the thickest fogs we had during the winter I set off with a friend to walk from St. Dunstan's down the Outer Circle towards Portland Place. We had not gone more than a few yards before it became evident that I was to do the escorting. I proceeded to direct the wandering footsteps of my seeing companion down the Outer Circle at a fair rate. Presently I heard the rattle of a stick on the railing, and, guessing it to be another St. Dunstaner, I hailed him, 'Hullo, old chap—who are you?'

"To my surprise, the reply was, 'British officer! Fed up with this beastly country. Can't see a thing!'

" 'No more can I,' was my answer; 'awkward, isn't it? Where are you going to? Perhaps I can help you.'

"'I am looking for York Gate,' he replied, with hope in his voice.

"'Well, if you go on this way you will end up in St. Dunstan's!' I volunteered.

"'St. Dunstan's,' he queried, 'that's where the blind fellows are, isn't it? Not a bad place to be, either, on a night like this!'

"We parted very good friends at York Gate, which I found for him without any trouble."

In the early part of 1918 I read an account of arrangements that were being made in France for the special training of dogs to be used as guides for blinded soldiers. Very interesting particulars were afforded of the special training given to these dogs with the object of teaching them to keep exactly in front of the man whom they were taking along, to give him warning of steps, to keep him from hitting against obstacles and to note the approach of motors and other vehicles. As I read the article it seemed to me that it would need a very special brand of dog intelligence if the canine guide were to be brought up to the point that would make him really trustworthy. Besides this, I had a feeling—which I had no doubt the men of St. Dunstan's fully shared with me—that a dog at the end of a string was apt to remind one a little too much of the blind beggar with his tapping stick and shuffling gait. However, I sent over to France for further particulars, but was not surprised to receive a reply telling me that the idea

had not proved as practical as was expected and had been abandoned.

Nothing gives people who can see a more favourable impression of the ability of a blind man than to find him able to get about freely and well by himself; and as the main thing we have to do is to impress the public with the fact that the loss of sight has not—as is so often thought to be the case—had a fatal effect upon our intelligence and ability, we should all of us, I think, make a very particular effort towards the greatest possible degree of independence in getting about by ourselves. The idea of regarding oneself, and becoming regarded, not as just a blind man, but as a normal person who cannot see, will be helped to an incredible degree by independence of locomotion.

Once I had a letter from an old St. Dunstaner who, though he cannot see at all, possesses two quite normal-looking eyes. He wanted to know whether I would take up the question of initiating some badge which folk like himself could wear and which the public would recognise as indicating that the wearers of it are blind.

My correspondent complained that he was often barged into when in busy thoroughfares, and thought that a badge such as he suggested would save this.

Undoubtedly it would, but I think a far simpler plan is the one which I myself adopt, and which

is to shut one's eyes when one finds oneself in busy surroundings.

To the blinded soldiers I constantly said: "Cultivate and cultivate your sense of hearing." A newly-blinded person is inclined to depend far too much upon the touch and too little upon the hearing. There are all sorts of sounds about, never noticed so long as the eye is there to help, but which without its aid are full of meaning.

Nor does this advice apply merely to the practical objects of getting about and doing things. The extent to which the sense of smell has the power of awakening memories, or reviving in the mind forgotten scenes and experiences that we recall with delight is well known. And through sound comes a vivid excitement of the imaginative faculties. In poetry of a certain order the most pictorial effects are obtained not by the description of things seen, but of sounds. Certainly the sounds heard on a country walk—especially with the extra refinement of hearing that a blind man acquires—bring a hundred scenes before the mind. And it is curious how delightful harsh sounds may become through the effect of association—the rattle of a lawn-mower, of a machine cutting hay, or the clatter of milk-pails. Even the noises of a city may have their charm, and the careful blind listener is able to pick up clues to a great variety of events that otherwise would escape his notice and his interest.

I have already referred to the great importance of visualising. I have a firm belief in practising this, not only in regard to persons and places which are about one, but by making a regular habit of seeing in the mind's eye places and happenings which belong to days gone by.

During the four or five years before my sight left me I played golf very keenly. It is, of course, a game which one can play well enough to enjoy when one's sight has become too defective to permit one to play any other. I played on a great many golf courses at home and abroad, and now I often find a real enjoyment in going over those courses hole by hole and hazard by hazard. During the last six years I have played, and thoroughly enjoyed, many a round of golf in my imagination, particularly on the course which I laid out myself after my sight began to fail, in the place which I then owned in Surrey. I have sometimes gone back, too, to games of cricket, football, or lawn tennis with much zest and interest. I am sure that all people who have lost their sight late enough in life to remember the world as it appeared to them will get a lot of fun out of this mental reminiscencing if they try it.

One of the most gratifying things that we people who have lost our sight have to think of is that, as the years go on, we shall become more and more adept blind men. A blind friend of mine, who gets about by himself almost miraculously, told

me the other day that during the whole of the years that he has been blind he has continued to improve, and that he is sure he will go on improving as long as his life lasts. To this testimony I can add my own, for I am very conscious of the fact that I miss my sight less and less. I now find myself doing things unconsciously over which a great deal of care and thought was necessary a year or two ago, and all newly-blind people will have the same experience as time goes by. The plain fact is that an intelligent blinded person becomes more and more normal and less and less blind every year he lives.

Often I had a general talk with the men of St. Dunstan's. All assembled in the big lounge, and I spoke to them for half an hour or more about matters of general interest to our little community. The subject of one of these talks was a visit which I paid to the Western Front in the summer of 1917.

I made this expedition because I felt convinced that no one at home could properly realise what was going on unless he had had an opportunity of observing for himself. But I had another object. I felt that some knowledge of actual conditions would create an additional bond of interest between myself and the blinded soldiers. And I had, too, the hope that—having to depend for my observations on other faculties than sight —my experience would be an encouragement to

them. I append a few brief extracts from a description of my visit which it took me about an hour to deliver, and my main object in doing this is to emphasise the hint contained in the final paragraph.

"We entered the village of Souchez. I do not know whether any of you were there, but Souchez is quite unrecognisable as ever having been a place of human habitation; in fact, there is nothing left of it except the remains of the sugar refinery, round which the French had such a tremendous fight, to show you that there ever was such a place. It is just a succession of mounds which are overgrown with wild mustard, scarlet pimpernel, poppies and weeds generally, and by the time it and other devastated villages have another year's weeds grown over them they will be really indistinguishable from the country round. Souchez stands out in distinction to the others because of the ruins of the sugar refinery, which make a good big heap, sticking out from which are pieces of girders, boilers and machinery. The wood of Souchez is still a wood, but it is a wood of blackened, disfigured trees; here and there one is making a gallant effort to put a few leaves out, but without much success. It is just a conglomeration of black trunks and very broken and distorted blackened branches. . . .

"The rain was falling heavily, and this went to give one a good idea of what the real thing was

like on the day of the great attack. The heavy clay ground was slippery and slimy to a degree that made walking very difficult, and when one thought that on the very day the Vimy Ridge was stormed the conditions were worse than on the day that I was there, one realised the tremendous difficulties our fellows had to overcome, and the heroism with which they overcame them.

"The ground of the Vimy Ridge is almost indescribable. It looks, I should think, like nothing else on earth. It is simply a succession of gigantic holes and jagged crevices. There are holes in which you could quite conveniently drop a good-sized house and lose it, and there are holes which would form a roomy grave for a dozen horses. The chalky subsoil has been churned to the top, and this upheaval of the ground could never have been brought about by any agency short of an earthquake other than the one which actually produced it.

"From the top of the Ridge one gets a very wide view of the surrounding country and of the scene of operations. Batteries behind us were firing away over the Ridge, and we could see the shells crashing on the land just beyond the embankment of the railway that runs between Lens and Arras. Straight in front lay Avion, too battered and too far off for one to be able to make out much of it; on the right was Givenchy, where I know several of you have been, and well off to

the left lay Lens, and Lens we could quite plainly see. We could distinguish the red walls and the shattered roofs and the general air of desolation. . . .

"We walked up the Ridge again from Thelus, which was just a succession of rubble heaps, and there was very little in the way of bricks even; it was mostly dust. From the top you could see Lens, although it was far away, and you could only see it very faintly, and from there you look at it along the high road that runs across from Arras to Lens. The road goes through Thelus and into Arras, and from the spot where we stood you looked right along it to Lens. We had been there two or three minutes when there was a sound which I had heard before, but it seemed not quite right. Instead of the bang coming first, the 'whiz' came first. Well, it is wonderful how quickly one's head can work. It took me an extremely small percentage of a second to realise what that 'whiz' meant. The shell went over our heads and flopped down fifty yards beyond us. My guide said, 'I told you this was not a very healthy spot. We had better get into that dug-out.'

"The dug-out was about twenty yards away, and we went in there and stayed there about ten minutes. Then, as it seemed the shell was only what they called a 'searcher,' we got out again. I came out last, as they had bundled me into it first. No sooner was I clear of it when another shell came

right down on the spot where we had been standing when the first one went over our heads, This one was a good deal too close to be comfortable. I felt a distinct shock, and was splashed all over with mud, and I had the further experience of receiving a wound on the head from a stone. Wound is, perhaps, rather a large word, for it only took the form of a pretty sharp rap which raised a good big bump, but it enabled me to realise just a little bit what the real thing must feel like. Six more shells followed in quick succession round us and we lost no time in getting away. . . .

"We stopped at Péronne, which a short time ago was a very prosperous town. It stood about 100 feet above the Somme, and had a very fine square, a beautiful church—we should call it a cathedral in England—and a beautiful sixteenth-century town-hall. It was altogether an unusually delightful and picturesque French town. Well, Péronne, to-day, is in a state for which it is difficult to find words. The town major took me round it and told me much about it. I think the only thing left in Péronne which remains in a fit state for human use is the bench on which I sat in that fine old square. There are certainly not five houses which are anything like habitable in the whole place. There is nothing left of the church except walls of varying heights, five pillars up the centre, and the remains of what might have been an altar, or might not. The town-hall is a

mass of ruins, and most of the houses are also in ruins; many are still standing, but they are roofless and entirely demolished internally. The disgusting things that the Germans did there are things one cannot very well talk of in public, but the whole place gave me an impression of the utmost horror. The villages—well, after all, one was told there had been villages, and one could take it or leave it as one liked, but with Péronne there was no question about it—there was the place wide open to look at, and it presented a scene of the most terrible desolation you can conceive. . . .

"I came back from the Front with the idea very firmly fixed in my mind—it was already there, but I came away with it more firmly fixed, and it will be firmly fixed as long as I have got a mind—the fact that you do not see quite as well as the other fellow should not be the slightest bar to your going about and observing everything and finding out everything for yourself. I am convinced that I have just as clear an idea of what is going on at the Front as has any one else who has been there lately. Never think because you are blind that you have got to stay in your own neighbourhoods, to potter about your own districts, where you know what and where everything is. Go out, see the world as it is, whether at home or abroad.

"You may say, 'Ah! but you want a very intelligent companion.' To some extent, yes, but still

more you want an intelligent head. An intelligent companion is unquestionably of very great help, but it is your own intelligence that has got to inform you. It is your own questions and the answers you get to them that will help you. The answer to one question will lead you to another, and it is the exercise of your own intelligence and the application of that intelligence to the conditions in which you now find yourselves which will enable you to go where you like, see everything that is to be seen, and come away with just as good and clear an impression as anybody else in the world could obtain."

CHAPTER VI

IN THE CLASS-ROOMS: BRAILLE, TYPEWRITING, SHORT-HAND AND TELEPHONE OPERATING

After St. Dunstan's had been established about two years, it was visited by a deputation from a large institution and workshop for the blind in the north of England. "How is it," the members asked, "that you can teach men in six to nine months what it takes us four or five years to teach them?"

I have already hinted at the reasons; let me recapitulate them here. First, these blinded soldiers as blind men have much in their favour because of their comparative youth, their general good health, and the indomitable spirit they brought to their task.

Secondly, they magnificently accepted the point of view on which all my work was based—that blindness is only a handicap, and one that it is quite possible to get the better of.

Thirdly, these men at St. Dunstan's were taught by blind teachers. I was a blind teacher at St. Dunstan's and I had under me a staff of blind teachers. There, the blind led the blind and we

did not fall into many ditches. I believe that the blind are the best teachers of the blind and, provided they are in the position to do so, the best people to care for them. When a blind man with that horrible feeling of helplessness which first overcomes him, particularly when he tries to do something, finds that the man who is teaching him is blind himself, he thinks at once: "I am not being asked to do something which is impossible, by some one who does not understand. I am being shown the right way—this man who is blind knows what he is doing and I too can do it."

There is between teacher and pupil a bond.

Finally, the success of the men at St. Dunstan's and the rapidity with which they became proficient were largely due to the short hours during which they worked. To work under new and unusual conditions imposes a great mental strain, and if that work is kept up hour after hour the brain becomes fagged and the worker is discouraged, and inefficiency undoubtedly results.

Now if the first step for the newly-blinded soldier was to learn to get about by himself and to look after himself in the ordinary matters of daily life, the next was to learn to read and write in the language of the blind. And because it was not easy to do so it was all the more valuable from the point of view of training.

Of course neither eyes nor finger-tips really read, but only convey the sense to the brain, and

the change merely consists in using one nerve-channel—it is true, a more clumsy one—instead of another. After all, the real problem with which the blinded man has to contend is the learning to do the old things in a new way; there can, it seems to me, be no better exemplification of this than lies in learning to read with the finger-tips instead of the eyes.

The study of Braille quickens to a surprising extent those faculties on which the blind man has to rely. Learning to read by a new method undoubtedly helps a man to learn to do many other things in unaccustomed ways. I go so far as to say that it would well repay a man to learn Braille even if he were never to read a line of a Braille book; of so much value is the exercise and stimulus it gives to the mental faculties.

Braille is difficult to learn. It is difficult for a well-educated person to master, and it will always remain to me a miracle how these, in many cases poorly educated, private soldiers mastered its intricacies and learned to read again as rapidly as they did.

Many of the men boggled at it a good deal at first. Nothing they did at St. Dunstan's seemed quite so much like going back to school as this. Contributors to the *St. Dunstan's Review* seized upon the instinctive aversion to Braille as a popular topic of humour. The men were pictured as

resorting to every possible expedient in order to avoid their torturers—the teachers.

"They will tell you," wrote one contributor, "that Braille is a delightful occupation, and so interesting. It is not. Braille is a high mystery. Its rites are presided over by priestesses, deeply learned in its laws. The Braille room may look, to the sighted, very like its neighbour, the typing room, but it is much more than a room. It is a temple. One day, after he has passed his novitiate, the lay brother will be conducted into an inner chamber, where under the vigilance of a High Priestess, and against time, he will read with his fingers about the ancient colonies of Greece, and he will come from that room either a despairing, ploughed wretch or an eager, triumphant master of the mysterious ordeal. Braille consists in the manipulation of the six harmless dots of the domino, until these are made to make arabesques and dance sarabands, like the fearsome light in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol.'"

In 1829 Louis Braille, a blind Frenchman, invented this embossed alphabet in which the characters are formed by arrangement of six dots placed in an oblong of which the vertical side consists of three and the horizontal of two. With different combinations of these dots all the signs and contractions are made up.

Beginners started their Braille lessons with large dots, about the size of peppercorns, and

came by degrees to the small dots that are ordinarily used. It is not so difficult to memorise the signs and contractions, but the finger has to be taught to distinguish them. There were a lucky few who possessed naturally a very sensitive touch, and it is curious that a man whose hand had been roughened by manual toil was just as likely to display this special sense of touch as another whose fingers were more delicate.

One of the many fallacies that are held by people who can see about people who cannot is the idea that immediately the sense of sight is lost an exquisitely sensitive sense of touch evolves itself. This is not the case. Every human being has a natural sense of touch, good, bad, or indifferent, and with the vast majority the quality of touch possessed by the individual is never known from birth to death.

Men who found their Braille touch lacking in sensitiveness were advised to vaseline or otherwise grease their finger-tips when they went to bed and to sleep with a glove on. This helped to a surprising extent.

Braille writing is done either by hand, when a small punch is used, or by an ingenious little Braille writing machine which has six keys to correspond with the six dots which have to be raised for the fingers of the blind reader to follow; the writing by hand is done on the reverse side of the sheet and, consequently, from right to left, so that

when turned over it is read from left to right in the ordinary way. Both sides of a sheet can be written on, the space between the raised lines on one side being used to contain the letters on the other side. In printing books in Braille, besides this system of interlining, another method, known as inter-pointing, is used—when the dots on one side fall between the dots on the other side on the same line. For beginners the interlined books are somewhat easier to read, but the inter-point system is preferable, as more words can of course be set on a page by this method.

Every man who made good progress with Braille was on leaving St. Dunstan's presented with a writing machine—and to all who passed the writing test, which involved an absolutely accurate knowledge of fully-contracted Braille, I gave a gold watch-chain.

I always did my utmost to persuade the men to stick at their study of Braille, however irksome it might appear at first, and it was quite wonderful how a man who for some weeks found it impossible to distinguish dots at all suddenly discovered that all the difficulties had disappeared.

Most men passed the tests in five or six months. There were, however, some brilliant exceptions, for one man passed in four weeks from the day of his first lesson.

There is not the least doubt that the loss of sight quickens and develops the other senses. The

A SECTION OF THE BRAILLE CLASSROOM

brain of the blind man is much more actively employed than the brain of a person who can see. He is always consciously thinking—whether he is walking or feeding or dressing himself—whatever he is doing, and I am perfectly sure that this increase of the need for thought develops the brain of the blind man just as increase of activity will develop the muscles of the athlete. Thus the blind man is able to do things both in regard to Braille reading and other pursuits and industries in a manner that he would never have been able so quickly to accomplish had he been in full possession of his sight.

I am very proud of the men of St. Dunstan's for the record they made in the study of Braille; nor must it be forgotten that this was only one of many tasks, all demanding a great deal of resolution, to which they were applying themselves simultaneously. How much they owed to the devotion of their voluntary teachers cannot easily be expressed. These teachers made their work a real labour of love. With infinite sympathy and tact they helped the men over their difficulties, and if what has been accomplished is wonderful, it has been due not a little to the efforts of those by whom the instruction was given.

In connection with the Braille-room there was a library, and the man who became an expert reader was made a free member for life of the National Library for the Blind, which possesses

40,000 volumes, to which number thousands are added yearly from the printing presses of the National Institute for the Blind, which undertook to pay postage on the books circulated among blinded soldier members. Special books for limited circulations are prepared by hand Braille writers.

And, without decrying the pleasure of being read to, there is for the blinded man a special delight in being able to read to himself, above all because in this way is provided a resource which enables him to fill in any unoccupied time when he happens to be alone. It gives him entrance to the world of books and brings back to him some of the independence he has lost.

Not only books, but monthly magazines and weekly newspapers are produced in Braille—and between blind people correspondence by this medium is carried on without the need of relying on a sighted person to read aloud the letters received.

To be able to write in Braille is a great advantage in that it enables a blind man to record and read his own notes and attend personally to his private and business papers. Many of the soldiers who are now poultry-farmers and tradesmen keep their accounts in Braille with complete success.

To the sighted person, as to one newly-blinded, nothing seems more impossible than that the fingers should ever learn to distinguish the different

arrangements of the dots and to be able to translate them into words—so small are the dots, so closely packed together.

How proficient a blind man can become will be seen from the following which appeared among the notes addressed to the men that I wrote from month to month in the *St. Dunstan's Review:*

"You will be interested to hear of an extraordinarily expert Braille reader whom I met a little while ago. He is the Rev. W. E. Lloyd, who works in a parish in the West-end of London. He dined with the blinded officers at Portland Place the other day, and after dinner I asked him whether he read Braille fast. He said: 'Yes, pretty fast, I think.' Then he went on: 'I found out rather an odd thing about my Braille reading the other day. Have you a Braille book and a handkerchief?' Both were produced, the Braille book being Mark Twain's 'Huckleberry Finn,' which is written in various American dialects, and, consequently, does not afford by any means simple reading with the fingers. Mr. Lloyd opened the book at random, found a full stop, and read a few sentences as quickly as his tongue could go, and it was evident that his fingers were well ahead of his tongue. He then asked for one thickness of handkerchief to be placed over the page. Through this he read just as fast as before. Two thicknesses did not diminish his speed in the least. When three thicknesses were put over the dots his

rate of reading slackened slightly, and when he attempted the seemingly impossible feat of reading through four thicknesses he still read faster than the average clergyman reads the lessons in church. The handkerchief was not a smooth, well-ironed one, but a crumpled one produced by one of the officers from his pocket, and the passages read were in all cases quite disconnected."

Shortly after this note appeared, one of the men who had been trained at St. Dunstan's wrote to tell me that he, too, could distinguish the Braille dots through two or three thicknesses of handkerchief. One of the blind ladies who taught Braille at St. Dunstan's habitually wore thick woollen gloves in cold weather. Fast reading, of course, can only come with practice, but the majority of our men could, when they left St. Dunstan's, read quickly enough to thoroughly enjoy a book.

A small number studied, in addition to ordinary Braille, the French system with its entirely different sets of contractions.

It is true that by the use of a writing frame, of which there are several kinds, people who lose their sight can continue to write by hand. But the frame does not prevent the deterioration of the handwriting which happens more or less rapidly according to the individual and arises from the fact that the eye is no longer able to correct the mistakes which the hand makes and which

therefore tend to become more and more accentuated. The two most noticeable instances of this are making the characters too small and omitting to carry the hand forward fast enough.

But though the blinded soldier who has learned Braille can keep records and accounts which he is able to read, and can write to others who are blind, there remains the question of his correspondence with people who can see.

Those who lose their sight in infancy can never learn to write in a really practical manner; and those who can already write when they become blind are seldom able to continue for long to do so legibly.

The way out of this difficulty is for the blinded man to use a typewriter. My own writing, unless I am careful and think of every letter, is practically unreadable; but now, thank goodness, I can rattle away on a typewriter. I am perhaps busier in these days than I have ever been in my life, but I write more letters with my own hand than I ever did before.

All the men who came to St. Dunstan's learned typewriting, and when they became proficient they were presented with a machine.

"What," the reader may exclaim, "a blind man use a typewriter!"

It is not perhaps generally known that the first writing machine was invented for the blind—and, although visitors to St. Dunstan's were always as-

tonished when they went into the class-rooms to see thirty or forty blind men seated at their machines, yet typewriting is by no means a difficult accomplishment for blind people to master. Nor is a special kind of machine employed. The men use an ordinary typewriter. There are no raised letters on the keys, and the only peculiarity to be noticed on the machine is the embossed scale which takes the place of the usual engraved scale and which makes it possible for the operator to tell by touch instead of by sight the position of the carriage.

For the blinded soldier who had also lost a hand or an arm a machine was made with an ingenious lever by which the carriage could be shifted for writing capital letters, fractions, and so on, while a special mechanical guide ensures that the paper is inserted straight in the machine.

As in the case of Braille, every pupil had an individual teacher. He was first told the general points of the machine and familiarised himself with them by touch. To many of the men the typewriter was a real novelty, which, if they had seen at all, they knew no more about than the average person does of a telegraph equipment. The pupil's fingers were guided on to the keys, of which the relative positions were pointed out, and after that it was merely a question of memory and practice. The teacher dictated letters and articles, explaining all the points that govern the spacing

of dates, addresses, salutations, tabulated columns, and so on. The test which had to be passed ensured that a man could write accurately and speedily a full-page letter containing capitals, figures, and all the special signs. This and a full-page essay had to be typed in an hour, one mistake and three corrections being allowed. The average time taken in passing this test was six weeks, though one man—and he had never used a typewriter before—passed without making a single mistake in three weeks.

The men not only learned to use a machine but to look after it—a skilled mechanic gave instruction on all the necessary technical points and taught the man how to oil his machine and to replace a worn ribbon. I receive daily many typewritten letters from men who were at St. Dunstan's; the majority of them are typed as perfectly as if the writers had not lost their sight.

An habitual visitor once told me that never had the meaning of blindness been so brought home to him as on one occasion when, passing through the lounge, which was in darkness and he supposed deserted, he suddenly heard the click of a typewriter and stumbled on a man working, of course unconcerned under conditions that to a sighted person seemed so incredible.

The drawbacks that the blinded typist experiences are just those which any one else would encounter who attempted to work in the dark—as

when he writes a letter unconscious that the ribbon is useless, or, as once happened, when a man by mistake seated himself at a machine with a special keyboard and all his work was, of course, wasted. Obviously he must depend on the help of some one who can see to know what he has written and, in the case of interruption, the last word he has typed.

The lessons in typewriting and the possession of a machine were of immense benefit to the blinded soldiers, adding always to the pleasure of life, while, in the case of those who set up in business, to be able to send out typewritten letters was little short of essential.

However, the mere ability to use a typewriter is of small advantage to a blinded man who seeks engagement in an office. It was for this reason that I decided that shorthand should also be taught at St. Dunstan's. That, indeed, to people uninitiated in the ways of the blind world must seem an impossible accomplishment for blind folks.

In fact it had always been considered in the blind world that shorthand writing could only be acquired by people who had been always blind—people who had been brought up to read Braille as others are brought up to read ordinary print—and I was severely chided by people who knew a great deal more about the blind world than I did for this idea of attempting to teach grown men—many of them with no high standard of educa-

A CORNER OF THE TYPEWRITING CLASSROOM

tion—this very difficult art of shorthand writing in Braille. However, I have my own ideas of the capacity of blind people and of what those can do who attack the problems of blindness with the courage that the blinded soldiers have shown. The result has been a triumphant success. Even before the end of the war we had already turned out some dozens of men, some of whom had gone back to their old posts as private secretaries, while others had had new situations found for them. In every case came from the employers testimonials to the effect that the work of these blind secretaries was just as good as the work done by others possessed of sight, and that it fulfilled every standard required. Several of these men are to-day earning higher wages than they earned before the war.

Once again I must speak with gratitude of the teachers, for it is quite clear that such results as these could not have been reached without immeasurable patience and skill in instruction.

The blinded soldier who wished to take up this work started in the ordinary way by learning to read and write under the Braille and typing teachers until he had passed his tests, when he was transferred to another room, where was a staff of both seeing and blind teachers, all of them expert stenographers.

The shorthand-typist continued his training in typewriting for five or six months, until a sufficient

degree of speed and absolute accuracy had been attained; while a complete knowledge of tabulating figures, setting out bill-heads, carbon work, and the hundred and one little things connected with the typewriter's mechanism were, of course, essential.

Care was taken to make the prospective shorthand-typist thoroughly conversant with up-to-date business methods, and the articles and letters dictated to him during his lessons were chosen with a view to increasing his general knowledge of commercial matters.

Of course the blind stenographer cannot use any of the ordinary methods employed by sighted people. The system used is a specially devised form of Braille.

There are about 150 initial, medial and final contractions, in addition to signs for some 500 words and phrases such as most frequently occur in commercial correspondence. It follows that an alert and retentive memory is essential.

Shorthand is taken down on a handy little machine. A thin paper ribbon passes through it, and on this the signs denoting the various words and phrases are embossed by six styles actuated by six keys. A seventh key, situated in the centre of the others, works the spacing mechanism. By an ingenious arrangement, the space is made at the same time as the last sign of a word or group of words is embossed, so that the writer can carry

on immediately with the next word or phrase. It is estimated that this device saves at least 25 per cent. of time. Before the blinded man was passed as proficient he had to go through a test of dictation at 100 words a minute, which is a good deal faster than most business men dictate.

Practice in reading shorthand was quite as important as practice in writing shorthand. When, therefore, the pupil had learned all the words, signs, and phrases, he had to do a certain definite amount of transcription each day. In reading his notes the pupil would run his paper through a guide, a piece of wood about nine inches long, in the middle of which is a shallow groove, the exact width of the paper.

A guide of this kind can be attached to a typewriter, so that a man's notes are just before him to feel as he transcribes them.

A shorthand machine was presented to every soldier when he became proficient in its use.

During his last few weeks at St. Dunstan's the shorthand pupil worked regularly in the secretarial or business offices, with the result that when he started in the post that had been obtained for him, office routine was a familiar part of his daily life.

It was the expert typist and shorthand writer who was best equipped to take up another of the more complicated occupations that were taught at St. Dunstan's. I refer to telephone-operating,

which also must seem a very strange thing for a blind person to learn.

The memory of the trained blind operator for numbers becomes astonishing, and I imagine is seldom equalled by those who can see.

A private branch exchange telephonist generally works alone in a small sound-proof room. Independence of the right sort is, therefore, the outstanding qualification of a good operator who must be relied upon to do everything himself.

The blind person cannot, of course, work in a public exchange where the flashlight system is in vogue, but he is able to use the drop shutter switchboards which are to be found in practically all large buildings, offices and business houses.

The speed with which the blinded soldier grasped and overcame the difficulties encountered was very remarkable; the training took only two or three months.

An elaborate installation was fitted up in one of the class-rooms at St. Dunstan's where blinded men were taught telephone operating. The switchboards were connected to a number of the offices and class-rooms, so that actual practice in dealing with business calls might be had at any moment.

The preliminary instruction took place on three switchboards, the instructor working the middle board, while calls were exchanged between the two pupils at the other two boards.

When the pupil attained a certain proficiency

in working the board, he practised taking down messages in Braille shorthand. Later he was given the opportunity of working the main St. Dunstan's switchboard, which was certainly as busy a board as any he would ever have to look after.

This practice on a real live switchboard completed the training, and the blinded soldier was then ready to take his place in any business house.

In actual work the operator gets to know the peculiar nature of his employer's business, memorises the telephone numbers most frequently used, and jots down in Braille the less common numbers, so that he can refer to them at any time without assistance.

St. Dunstan's operators have been found employment by many large business firms in London and the provinces, and all the reports that reach me testify to their ability to manage the switchboards as quickly and as accurately as any sighted telephonist.

CHAPTER VII

THE BLIND MASSEUR AND POULTRY FARMER

At the end of the terrace lawn overlooking the great workshops were the rooms where the blinded soldiers attended their lectures on massage.

I know of no individual fact in connection with St. Dunstan's that so strikes the imagination as this, that a large number of men blinded in the war should in a year or so have so equipped themselves as to be able to help in the cure of other wounded men lying in military hospitals. The transition from a state of hopelessness and helplessness, with the haunting prospect of a useless life, to this exercise of highly trained skill in work of the utmost utility is really amazing to contemplate.

It is the more amazing because expert authorities thought it was entirely impracticable to attempt to train the blinded soldiers as masseurs. It is not a new occupation for the blind, but in every case hitherto the blind masseur has been a person of superior intellectual attainments, very often a person who had been in the medical profession before blindness overtook him; and the

fact that I always laid down the rule that our men must be perfect in whatever they did was looked upon as a fatal bar to the blinded soldier's acquiring a sufficient degree of proficiency in the difficult art of massage. This is a point that I was very insistent upon. For example, take the case of the piano-tuner. If you have a piano tuned by a man who can see and he damages it you condemn him as being individually inefficient, but if a blind man damages your instrument the natural inclination is to attribute his failure to his blindness, and there remains the impression that blind men as a whole are incompetent. For this reason alone it was absolutely necessary that the blind operator should be perfect. Now perfection in the case of massage means very strenuous study.

Our men had to pass the very stiff examinations of the Incorporated Society of Trained Masseurs. They had to acquire a considerable knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology, besides gaining the manipulative dexterity that is necessary. But from the first they came through the ordeal triumphantly. Before the war had ended some 60 men had passed this examination and were busily at work. Most of them were employed at military hospitals, and in nearly every case where one or more of our men went to a military hospital the authorities of that hospital asked for more.

Early in 1917 I received a letter from the commanding officer of a hospital in the north of Eng-

land in which he said: "Your blind masseur has been with us now two months, and of the staff of twenty-three he is the best. I should like you to send me three more as soon as you can let me have them."

About the same time the principal of the massage department of the largest command depot in the kingdom, said to me: "Of my staff of thirty-two masseurs your four blind boys are incomparably the best there, and we want four more."

A very striking testimony to the competency of the blind masseur is contained in the following letter from Sir Robert Jones, the renowned orthopædist, at whose world-famed establishment several of our men were:

> "The work which your blind masseurs do is very exceptional in quality. They are in every sense of the term a great success. I find them all intelligent and possessed of a wonderful gift of touch together with keen enthusiasm for their work. Apart from their qualities as masseurs, I think they have an extraordinarily good psychological effect upon their patients. I consider institutions which secure the services of these men trained at St. Dunstan's very fortunate."

Massage indeed may be said to be the one occupation for which the peculiar qualifications of the blind man render him not merely as good as, but positively better than the man who can see. Colo-

nel H. E. Bruce Porter, C.M.G., the famous London physician who was placed in command of the 3rd London General Hospital, took a great interest in the work of the blind masseurs who were employed there, and when talking to me about them one day said: "Your fellows are doing splendidly. I consider it nothing short of a crime that any man who can see should do this work."

I think it deserves to be called amazing that these blinded soldiers, many of them lads with the ordinary Board School education, should have been able to acquire the knowledge necessary for this work wholly apart from the dexterity which is demanded for such a high degree of proficiency.

The sensitiveness and delicacy of touch which come to characterise blind people make massage an ideal occupation for them. The blind masseurs whom we trained were able without exception to start earning very substantial amounts.

Here is a little sketch of the scene in the classroom, written by Mr. C. W. Mills, a journalistic visitor:

"There were ten men in the room, one of the several rooms used for tuition in massage—ten men and a skeleton, grimly hooked up in a corner, with its long, lean, listless arm stretched out and its knotted fingers resting in the hand of one of the men. The man who held the 'model's' hand was talking in terms that were beyond me. One other man stood close by, listening attentively and

now and again interpolating a question or an assent. The other men were seated at a table, each one feeling a scapula.

"They all seemed so intensely interested and so thoroughly acquainted with the subject at which they were engaged, that I could hardly realise that these pupils in anatomy were blind. Evidently, the man working the gruesome thing in the corner was a tutor; I heard him say: 'When the bicep muscle is contracted, the radial and ulnar bones, forming the lower part of the arm, are raised—see?'

"And the answer came: 'Yes, I see.'

" 'Well, put your fingers there,' said the tutor. 'Here, let me guide you. That's it, now do you see?'

" 'Yes, I see now,' was the reply again.

"To me it appeared just a trifle ironical, this continuous asking the blind man if he could see. It was all very well for the tutor, who had the whole thing before him, to ask another if he could see; it was all very well even if the pupil were not blind. But the blind man passed his fingers along the gaunt length of the 'model's' arm and said 'I see.'

"At that moment, the tutor turned round to note who had entered the room. He greeted us with 'Good afternoon,' but his greeting was sightless. He, too, was blind!

"Some were there who had, oh! such wonderful

eyes, that looked through your very soul, looked away into the land beyond the artificial things they would never see again. Others were there whose eyes were blurred and clouded, scarred and shattered and destroyed.

"But there was no doubt about it, every one of them could 'see.' Quick and pliant, their fingers sensed that at which they were employed. Their eyes, when they looked anywhere, looked into the dark. But they could SEE."

When the men had passed the preliminary course of instruction at St. Dunstan's, they walked daily to the National Institute for the Blind for a more advanced training before going up for their examination.

Let me quote a short description of their studies that appeared in the *St. Dunstan's Review*:

"The gymnasium presents several features of interest to those possessing a knowledge of physical education in any form. Around the walls are arranged various appliances for correcting deformities and strengthening weakened muscles, while in the centre stand the plinths on which reclined the models during instruction in the practical side of the work. Next door to the gymnasium is the lecture-room, in which may be seen the models used in teaching the theoretical part of the work.

"In a tall, narrow cupboard stands the skeleton,

one of the finest specimens obtainable, being about six feet in height and perfect in every detail. The joints of this skeleton are so arranged that every form of dislocation can be easily demonstrated by a lecturer, as also can all its ordinary movements.

"Beside this stands the anatomical figure, which is perhaps the most prized possession of the school. The muscles and superficial structures generally have been cut away on the left side in order to show the deep-lying arteries, veins and nerves, the exact course of which may be traced by the finger from start to finish. On the right side the muscles and superficial structures have been left in place, and can be examined in their correct positions. The head of the figure can be taken to pieces, and all the various passages in the throat and nose examined. All the internal organs can be taken out, their relative position to one another studied, and their details noted. Some of these open and show clearly what is the internal structure of the organ.

"Thus every student gains a perfect knowledge of the various parts of the human body, and too much is not left to the imagination. All this is particularly valuable to the blind, who are unable to do very much in the way of studying diagrams.

"A really fine library of technical books in Braille type has been prepared, and copies of these books are presented to every student. Many of

these have been compiled by an ex-student of the school, who, having lost his sight in the middle of his medical career, has turned his attention to the practice of massage.

"The course of training may be regarded by many as somewhat lengthy, lasting as it does from a year to eighteen months, or even longer if ill-health prevents regularity of attendance, but massage is not a simple subject to master, and a shorter period of training would be quite inadequate.

"First a good working knowledge of the structure and functions of the human body must be acquired. The student begins by tackling the numerous bones which form the framework on which the soft tissues of the body are built up. When he has mastered their names, positions, bony prominences, depressions, surfaces and borders, and the many muscles and ligaments attached to them, he passes on to the study of the joints, the various movements of which they are capable, and the ligamentous bands which keep in place the bones forming them. He then studies the muscles which move these joints, learning exactly where they are fastened to the bones, and what movements they will perform by their contraction. Then follows the study of the blood-vessels which nourish these muscles and the nerves which put them into action. Then he must attack the internal organs and understand their structure, position and peculiar use to the body. When all this

has been mastered, he passes on to the study of the various diseases which may be treated by massage, and the various movements appropriate for their individual treatment. All this time he has been learning and practising the somewhat numerous massage movements, the acquisition of which demands a great deal of patience and perseverance."

Part of the training consisted of simple work on patients at the Middlesex and Hampstead Hospitals.

To the blinded soldier who took up massage a knowledge of Braille was doubly important, because in this way he had access to a number of essential text-books on anatomy and physiology. Thus the months that he spent at St. Dunstan's were a time of intensive study; and yet the short hours were adhered to and there remained ample opportunity for the simultaneous development of the powers to enjoy recreation indoors and out.

POULTRY-FARMING

Poultry-farming was another branch of our training that demanded very real application. The lecture-rooms in their remote corner by the lake presented always a scene of earnest study. Poultry-farming has proved a decided success. There are a number of men settled in different parts of the country who are pursuing it, so far

as one can judge at the time of writing, with all the ability requisite to provide them with a comfortable livelihood for the future. Unlike some of the other occupations that we taught, it is not one at which a man can begin to make money as soon as he starts work. If he makes a good start the first year, secures a little profit in the second year, and is in full swing in the third year he is doing well; but in the opinion of experts—and in this work we had the help and advice of the best experts in the kingdom—the men already started were, when this was written, doing the right work in the right way.

They had certainly chosen a very interesting occupation and one in which, while they could do everything for themselves, they could also interest other members of their families. With this in mind I made arrangements with a poultry-training farm where, free of cost, relations of blinded soldiers might go to study the subject and learn the same scientific methods as we taught at St. Dunstan's.

The course in our Country Life Section was divided into two periods of six weeks, each period ending with an examination conducted by some well-known poultry expert.

Instruction was started in the classification of breeds, the blind pupil being taught to distinguish the various breeds and varieties by touch. In quite a short time he learnt to tell the different breeds by feeling the combs, wattles, weight

and plumage, and by the same methods he could also distinguish between males and females.

"I saw," wrote a visitor to St. Dunstan's, "one man having a lesson on how to use an incubator; that man was not only totally blind, but had lost one arm and a finger and thumb off the other hand, but with his three fingers and stump he could select any fowl out of the nine or ten different kinds and tell you the breed of each."

The next subject taken was feeding and the mixing of foods. The different varieties of food were put in small tins, and each was handled in turn, until the pupil was able to distinguish between all varieties by either touch, smell or taste. When this was mastered he was taught to mix and prepare the foods and how to vary them according to the needs of his fowls.

The men were taught to make working models of the standard chicken-houses and runs which are used by all St. Dunstan's poultrymen. In making these they learned how they are constructed and used, and were able to make the larger houses later on.

Instruction followed in the breeding and rearing of chicks, both by natural and artificial means. Artificial incubation was carefully dealt with, the blinded soldier being taught to look after the incubator himself, with only the assistance of a sighted person in reading the temperature of his thermometer and trimming the lamp.

Among the other points touched on were the care of the chicks when hatched, the cure or prevention of the various forms of disease to which fowls are subject, the marketing of eggs, and the preparation of birds for the table.

Lessons were given in the care of ducks and turkeys, while the men could go through a course of rabbit breeding and keeping, an excellent adjunct to poultry-farming.

Gardening, too, was taught to enable a blinded man to grow his own vegetables and more particularly to produce foodstuffs for his birds.

The men learned to build chicken-houses, nesting-boxes, and to make runs, gates, and to do any other carpentry work which might be found useful on a poultry-farm.

The last month of a man's training was spent on St. Dunstan's Poultry Farm in Hertfordshire, where were raised the birds given to men when they started in business, and the practical work done here was of the utmost value.

Each man's plans were individually discussed with him and the decision was made as to what part of the country he would settle in. Unless he already had somewhere to return to, search was made for a suitable place, and as soon as this was found he went down to inspect it and to see if it suited his requirements.

Arrangements were then made for the setting up of his houses, wire netting, runs, incubators,

and all the paraphernalia which went to make up his outfit. These were then conveniently set out and made ready for the reception of the fowls by the man himself, with the assistance of a St. Dunstan's poultry expert. As soon as his place was ready the birds, which had been reared on our own farm, were dispatched, and the blinded soldier was then able to start his poultry-farm on proper lines.

A staff of visitors, all of them experienced poultry-men, are employed to visit the men periodically, reporting on their progress to the After-Care Department.

Owing to the very great difficulty of obtaining good foodstuffs locally, this Department purchased these in large quantities in the best markets and supplied them to poultry-farmers, carriage free and at cost price.

Of the men engaged in learning what we called poultry-farming carpentry, a journalistic visitor wrote:

"Somewhere in the north-west corner of Regent's Park, shaded from the rest of the world by closely covering trees, is a little poultry-farm, where the structures are made and the birds attended to by blind men.

"When I first came upon this farm, I was about to withdraw, believing that I had come upon a working yard of the builders who were engaged in some part of the grounds on the erec-

tion of a new building. But when I noticed a man handling a piece of wood and feeling it while he 'looked' the other way, I knew that this was a place to visit.

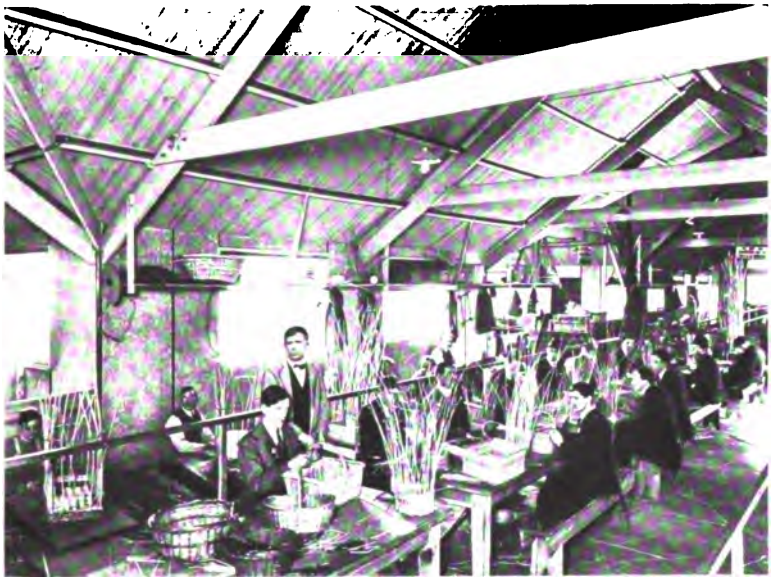
"Hammers were smacking merrily and saws were grinding furiously; here was a blind lad raising aloft a beam, as the first sign of a hen-house he was making; there, another unrolling and measuring a length of wire netting; now and then some one would call: 'Hi, you there! After you with that mallet.' For the rest, there was little ado; none of the bustle to be expected where construction is proceeding; none of the standing about in idleness that is so often a feature of a time-working job. Everything was so orderly, so regular and so systematic that, to stand by and watch, knowing the work to be carried on by blind men, was like being in a dream."

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE WORKSHOPS: BASKETRY, MAT-MAKING, BOOT-REPAIRING, JOINERY AND NETTING

BASKET-MAKING is the oldest and most universally established industry for the blind. There is no basket-making machinery. Every basket the world over is made by hand, and blind people can learn to make them just as well—and with practice just as quickly—as can any one else. The men of St. Dunstan's acquired this art of basketry with extraordinary rapidity. Those who have been set up in the business make very substantial additions to their pensions. As in the case of the other trades and occupations learnt at St. Dunstan's, many of them are making more money than they did at the occupation they followed before they were blinded.

In the main, two different kinds of materials are used in the manufacture of baskets; and the trade is, therefore, divided into two classes, centre cane work and willow work. The cane which is used in the manufacture of the former kind of basket is more easily handled, and this branch was therefore better suited to men whose injuries forbade



ONE SIDE OF THE BASKETRY WORKSHOP

them to stoop, or some of whose fingers were missing or damaged.

Light basketry also proves itself to be an excellent adjunct to other trades, for the work is done on a table, very little space and only a few tools being required. Among the many varieties of articles which can be made in centre cane are tea-trays, shopping baskets, work-baskets, waste-paper and every other sort of ornamental basket.

Willow is thicker and less pliable than cane, and it follows that greater strength is required in using it. The work is done on the floor, the man sitting and using his legs as a vice in which to hold the basket he is making.

The process by which a basket is made of cane or of willow is practically the same, but there is a good deal more to be learnt in the latter branch of the trade. For instance, willows have to be soaked in water to make them pliable and easily workable, the different thicknesses of willow being immersed for varying times, and the blind craftsman had to learn to sew in linings of hampers, fix wooden floor-boards, metal hinges and locks, and so on.

In basket-making the craftsman can always be evolving new models, which adds not a little to the interest of the work. Early in the history of St. Dunstan's one of the blinded soldiers produced a white willow waste-paper basket after his own

design which could with difficulty be improved upon. It so happened that on the day he finished this particular article the Princess Louise paid a visit to St. Dunstan's. She was immediately attracted by the basket, ordered several to be made for her, and was kind enough to permit her name to be given to it. The designer could have earned a satisfactory income from the "Louise" basket alone had he chosen to confine himself to its output.

One of the chief difficulties that the blinded soldier encountered in basket-making was to maintain the shape: the angles of the square, the exact curve of the rounded work. Finally, one of the blind teachers invented a frame upon which the designer could base the foundation of his basket and then proceed without fear of going astray.

The beginner's hands were at first guided by his blind instructor, his work was constantly examined and rectified by these learned fingers, and besides this practical help there were occasional lectures in the workshops; confidence soon came as he mastered the rudiments of the craft, and before three or four months had passed he was usually able to turn out regularly the high standard of work that was expected in baskets made at St. Dunstan's.

Repair work was also taught, and this added considerably to a man's earning capacity.

MAT-MAKING

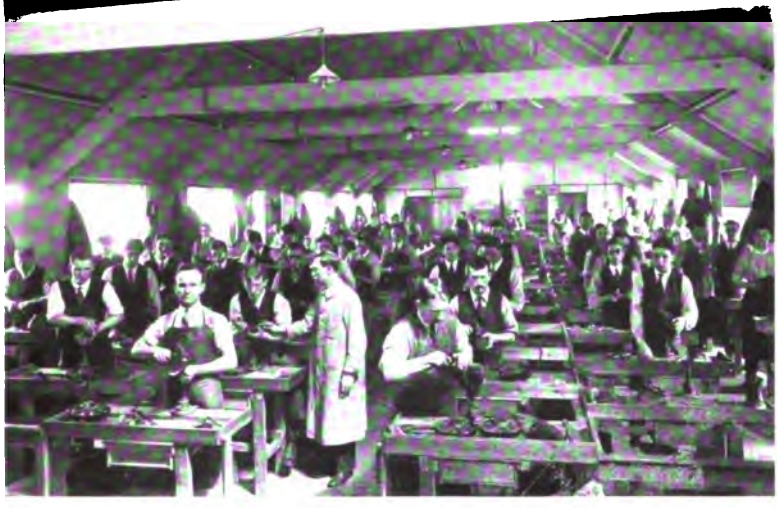
Like basket-making, mat-making is a well-recognised employment for the blind. We taught our men the old-fashioned art of mat-making on a hand-frame. It has the disadvantage of being rather monotonous, but it is an occupation at which a man can quite easily make a very satisfactory income by working six or seven hours a day.

Mat-making was dubbed "physical jerks" by the learners, because of the different positions taken in the course of the work. "Warping," as the fixing of the foundation on the frame is called, requires up-and-down movements of the arms to a distance of five or six feet. Beginning on the left side of the top rail, the selected yarn is drawn down tightly to the bottom, hooked on pins, then up again and down until the skeleton is complete. The threading or weaving of the mat is begun at the bottom and by the aid of the weft-stick (a measure marked with Braille dots) is continued until the specified dimension is reached; so that an adaptation of the "full knee bend" when indulging in a prolonged spell on the haunches was in much use. Stools of different heights were provided so that the operator could work in a sitting position most of the time.

The novice, however, did not start immediately on the frame. He was first put to the somewhat monotonous task of "pulling down." This is dis-

tributing the yarn from the bale into bins, from which it is drawn off on revolving runners and wound into balls from which the weaver works. "Pulling down" was not popular, but it had to be learnt, and it was useful in accustoming the pupil to handling the yarn. It was a great day for him when he was promoted to the frame and was started upon an actual mat. He was then initiated into "warping," already mentioned; "lacing" or "whipping," the technical terms for weaving the yarn—now called "thrumbs"—across the "warp" or foundation; cutting down, bordering and finishing.

All this sounds more complicated than it really is. As a matter of fact, mat-making was the simplest of the trades to pick up, and it was not often that a pupil of average intelligence took more than three months to perfect himself. At the same time, there is all the difference between learning how to make a mat and making a mat well. The difficulties are not many, but are none the less serious. For instance, it is an easy fault for a blind person to put two warps on the same pin, which may not be fixed in its proper place to hold the right warps apart, in which case the "lacing" of the "thrumbs" goes all wrong. The "thrumbs" themselves may not be laced with sufficient firmness, so that the mat does not hold well, and each line may be carelessly hammered home, so that the whole fabric is loose at the finish instead of firm. Each



A PORTION OF THE BOOT-REPAIRING WORKSHOP

one of these is a little thing in itself, but it has to be carefully watched and mastered.

Great care must be exercised not to waste the material by cutting the "thrumbs" too long. A maker who does not heed this will find himself using more yarn than a more careful workman finds necessary.

The average thickness of a mat is from 1¼ to 1½ inches. If it is made thicker than this it has to be cut down in the shearing machine, and the extra length is wasted. This may mean the loss of a considerable part of the profit.

Mats are made of various sizes, and the measure-stick has raised marks upon it, indicating feet, inches and half-inches. Great care must be taken in making the measurements exact, as mats are frequently ordered to fit into "wells" in doorways, and an error of half an inch constitutes a serious defect.

When the mat is finished to size it is cut down from the frame and carried to the bordering table, where it is placed face downwards, and an edging of stout plait is sewn around its sides with a packing-needle, and when that is done the article is finished, all but the shearing. It is a painful job for the learner, this bordering; but the soldier had a stout heart and—what is more to the point—stout fingers. And when the first mat was done great was the pride of the worker; so great, indeed, that in the majority of cases he could not

bear to part with it, but wanted it for his own home, so that his children and grandchildren might admire and wonder at his prowess.

The man who had an aptitude for his work did not stop at ordinary door-mats. He aspired to the shaped mat, which is a very ticklish business. Orders were often received for odd shapes with irregular sides and rising corners and gaps to fit over protruding obstacles. Intricate paper patterns were delivered which had to be copied exactly; motor mats, step and stair mats; and all kinds of puzzling varieties came to the workshop.

The demand for mats with coloured borders or centres or letters had also to be dealt with, and for this more ingenuity was needed, as the coloured material is a different kind of fibre, and much care is necessary to lace it exactly to measure or the result is inharmonious.

The making of plait or sinnet mats was also part of the men's training. These are the rougher mats that are used outside the doors of houses. Housemaids' "kneelers," which are made by a combination of fibre and plait work, provided variety in the mat-maker's occupation, and a small fibre scrubbing brush made in just the same way as an ordinary mat was a novelty that had the advantage of using up odd bits of material.

Mat-repairing as well as mat-making was taught, for repair work pays well and there is a constant demand for it.

BOOT-REPAIRING

The most largely followed occupation taught at St. Dunstan's was boot-repairing—cobbling is the old-fashioned word, and "snobbing" was the pet name for it among the men at St. Dunstan's.

The blind cobbler acquired in the short period of his training at St. Dunstan's the ability to sole and heel a pair of boots just as well as anybody in the kingdom could do it. I encouraged the cobblers to combine with their work mat-making, because the one disadvantage of cobbling is that the work may come irregularly; there may be twenty pairs of boots to repair one week and only half a dozen the next. In a slack week the man can make a few mats and have the advantage of a change of work.

Boot-repairing had one important point of difference from the other industries we taught at St. Dunstan's. The After-Care Department could afford no help in selling goods, and the work goes always direct to the customer. If anything, therefore, more care had to be taken in this trade than with any other to be sure that the pupil was an adept—that is, as perfect as he could be made—before he was considered qualified to go out and fend for himself.

On the other hand a good many of the old soldiers were not ignorant of the first elements of

mending shoes. The amateur "snob" is to be met with in all the working ranks.

The tools that the blind cobblers use are, generally speaking, the same as those of the ordinary workman, but ingenious little punchers, for measuring the exact distance between the brads on both sole and heel, and making the necessary indents in the leather, help him considerably. Having made these indents he is able to distinguish them with his fingers and insert the brad unerringly, hammering each one home as he fixes it. A little plane is used for removing the rough edges, instead of the knife that the sighted cobbler employs.

The routine at St. Dunstan's was simple. Novices were given well-worn boots to start upon, and under the guidance of pupil teachers—that is to say of blinded soldiers who had already picked up the trade themselves—they soled and heeled and heeled and soled the same boots until they acquired enough experience to be entrusted with a real job. It was a proud moment for them when they were told that the treadmill drudgery was over, and that they might put aside "practice" boots and begin to repair boots in real earnest.

Their first job was an easy one, chosen from among boots sent for repairs, and it is safe to say that never were more care and thought given to a sole as in the first real work that the repairer was allowed to do. The leather was, of course, of the

best, and the cutting of it into strips, the affixing of it to the shell, the shaping, the finishing, were performed under the careful direction of a skilled instructor, who permitted nothing to pass that was not first-rate.

There was always a steady supply of work from other men and members of the staff. Some boys' and girls' boots were also repaired for adjacent orphanages, so that the work, particularly at the end of the course, was similar to that which they would have when starting work on their own account.

Special lessons were given upon the various ways in which boots are made and upon the methods of cutting up leather and making the best use of material.

When the learner had advanced from the hands of the pupil teacher to those of the experienced instructor he frequently found that his task became harder. What might be passed on a practice boot could not be passed on one that was intended to be worn, and the teacher was more lynx-eyed or keen-fingered and less inclined to overlook anything but perfection.

A steady feature of the cobblers' section of the workshop was the repairing of Army boots; four or five dozen pairs were regularly taken in each week. The authorities of the Army Clothing Department expressed their satisfaction with the way the work was done. It was a valuable ex-

perience for the blinded cobblers, and especially for those who were going to settle in the country and would have to mend the heavy hobnail boots that country people wear.

Some boot-repairers appeared to be born to the job, and from the first moment of their fingering of a last brought joy to their foremen. Others quite slow at the start picked the trade up thoroughly at the end. It is not always the quickest workman who is the best, and some of the slower cobblers turned out the most exemplary work. It seldom required more than six months for a man to become a skilled craftsman. The boot-repairers who have been started from St. Dunstan's are thriving at their business, getting plenty of work, and, what is more important, giving satisfaction to their customers.

JOINERY

The idea of teaching joinery to the blinded soldiers was brought to my mind by hearing of an extraordinarily expert man, I think probably the most expert blind workman in this country, perhaps in the world, who had lost his sight some sixteen years previously in Sheffield. He was then a thoroughly skilled carpenter. He passed through a period of miserable depression and began to believe that he could do nothing—such a period as, I am thankful to say, the men of St. Dunstan's were entirely spared. He then made up his mind

to take up his old work and is to-day just as good a carpenter as any man in the kingdom. If we wanted any carpentry done about the house at St. Dunstan's he came along and did it. It was his aptitude that made me believe that something of the kind could be done by blind people who had not been carpenters.

The speed and certainty with which the blinded soldiers picked up the trade of joinery—for this is perhaps the more correct term by which to designate what they were taught—were not so remarkable as they seemed. It was only required that the learner should bring an unbiassed mind to his task. The tools are practically the same for the sighted and the non-sighted, and the work proceeded on similar lines. The apprentice had only to work with his fingers instead of his eyes.

His rule was marked by notches, so that he could fix his distances by touch and in the same way work to the marks of his scribing knife. Laths were used to guide his sawing, and he made guides to hold his saw when cutting tenons.

The construction of some articles was varied for his assistance, and he acquired all the principles of the trade by a course of work specially adapted to his individual capacity and requirements.

The budding joiner was at first placed under the guidance of an assistant—usually a fellow St. Dunstaner who had shown special aptitude at the

trade—who instructed him in the first uses of the similar tools. But in order that he might not be discouraged, he acquired this knowledge while at the same time producing such first-step articles as glove and handkerchief boxes, hook rests, stools and soap boxes, instead of merely practising on stray boards. So that from the first moment he was engaged in actual productive work which aroused both interest and pleasure. His novitiate might be long or short, depending on his readiness to acquire knowledge, but it was never dull. Armed with this preliminary knowledge of the use of the tools, he passed on to the most advanced class and came under the direct control of the chief joinery instructor, the blind expert whom I have already mentioned, who tested him, sized him up, and after a few trials selected the kind of work at which he was most likely to make good. Some men did best at small work such as photo frames, tea-trays, and so forth; others were attracted by the larger kinds, as cupboards, tables, boxes; others yet again developed a knack for bed-rests, combined meal-tables and reading-stands, book-shelves, medicine cupboards, and similar things.

With the knowledge gained at St. Dunstan's a joiner could embark on varied kinds of work, and we have records of men who started for themselves tackling jobs they had never attempted before by merely adapting their knowledge to new conditions.

ONE END OF THE JOINERS' WORKSHOP

The oak trays with brass handles and fancy moulding which were almost a specialty at St. Dunstan's won wide renown, and it was actually impossible for the producers of them to keep pace with the demand.

The picture-frames with their accurate corner-fittings and their variety of style were very popular. They were made to fit any size picture, and the men cut the glass themselves and completed the frame without any assistance.

In no section could greater diligence be observed than in this department, and so keen were some of the pupils that although working hours officially ended at 4.30 p.m., it was unusual not to find some fascinated joiner still at his task until a much later time. Indeed the curious experience —to the sighted—of a man hammering, nailing and planing in the dark could be frequently met.

The absorption of joinery was a wonderful joy to the blinded man, and it was difficult to watch unmoved the parental pride with which the artificer would dwell upon the growth of his work, examining it with critical but kindly fingers, and developing and finishing with an assiduous care which showed how much its perfect completion meant to his guiding mind.

NETTING

The remaining occupation that we taught at St. Dunstan's was netting. The lessons were

arranged to fit in between periods of strenuous mental or physical effort in the class-rooms and work-shops.

It was found that if netting were regarded as a paying hobby or an adjunct to a man's main trade it filled a very satisfactory niche midway between work and recreation. Hours otherwise empty could be filled, and all waste time redeemed to the benefit of health and pocket.

There was no expensive apparatus required, and the work could be done any time, anywhere, indoors or out.

The Netting Room could accommodate about 500 men daily, and was always packed with eager pupils. The country was ransacked to discover every kind of netted article, and a really wonderful range of work resulted. Several original ideas were evolved in the St. Dunstan's Netting Room, and the men who obtained their netting proficiency certificate had at their fingers' ends a thoroughly useful adjunct to the more solid trades which they had learnt.

Proficiency certificates were given to the men in all the branches of work that were taken up—testifying to their ability to pursue each particular calling.

CHAPTER IX

SETTLEMENT AND AFTER-CARE

BY CAPT. IAN FRAZER

When Sir Arthur Pearson first conceived the idea of caring for blinded soldiers and sailors, he realised that the ideal which should be constantly kept in mind should be that of placing a man out in the world so trained and equipped as to enable him to form a useful unit in a community as nearly as possible like the one in which he lived and worked before he was blinded. He felt confident from the first that the hale and hearty men who were to come to St. Dunstan's would be able to keep pace with the world and lead an independent earning life if they were given a proper start and if some suitable and permanent organisation existed which would overcome the particular difficulties to which a blind man must be subject.

The business of starting men out in life when their period of training was completed was dealt with by what was called the Settlement Department. During the last few weeks of a man's stay at the Hostel the question of his future was dis-

cussed, and if it so happened his own home was large and convenient enough, it only remained for his outfit of tools and apparatus to be sent there before he could start work. There were obvious advantages in settling a man in a place that was familiar to him, for not only could he find his way about with greater ease and convenience than in a strange place, but also the fact that he was known in the neighbourhood was sure to influence favourably the growth of his trade. It often happened, however, that the men's original homes were inconveniently situated or too small when they had to put one room aside for a work-room or shop; and for the latter, of course, suitable premises had to be sought where steady trade was assured. The Settlement Department, therefore, had to discover the individual needs of each man in the matter of accommodation, and then set about satisfying this need, which, under war-time conditions, was no easy task.

Every St. Dunstaner was provided with a complete set of the tools and apparatus required for the particular trade he had learnt, and assistance was given in installing these in his home—repairs, decorating, and shop-fitting being carried out if necessary.

Married men were, as a rule, given a weekly allowance to assist them in meeting the burden of their rent during the first year, and this gift was extended to single men when necessity arose.

Once he was started off, with the initial stock of materials, advertising matter, etc., the blinded soldier's name was transferred to the books of the After-Care Organisation, which was created to care for him permanently.

I had been living with Sir Arthur for some time and had taken considerable interest in the life and work of the men of St. Dunstan's. This fact, I suppose, led him to ask me, early in 1917, to undertake the organisation and administration of the permanent work of caring for men when they had been settled at their various home industries in all parts of the United Kingdom. I was very proud to take on these responsibilities, and it was with feelings of the deepest joy and gratification that I stepped into harness. That I should be able to be of some assistance in the administration of a scheme which was to help along the good fellows who had been blinded as I had, and that I should be permanently working with the Chief, who had by his courageous example shown me how to remodel my own life, was a source of great satisfaction to me. Though I was not responsible for the men's welfare until they had left St. Dunstan's and had been completely settled, I made a point of keeping in touch with them from the time they first arrived in hospital in this country until their period of training was over, so that we might get to know each other, and I might study their progress and talk over their future arrangements

with them. I paid regular visits to the chief London hospitals in which men were treated before they came to us, and set aside certain hours of each day for short interviews while they were with us.

During his last week at the Hostel, each man paid a visit to my office, when I discussed with him the arrangements that had been made for looking after his future welfare and told him what to do when assistance was needed, or when raw materials were required.

In matters of business, the strictest business principles were observed, but at all times a spirit of comradeship entered into my negotiations with the men, with the result that constant friendly correspondence passed between us on every subject, whether relating to business, technical, or even domestic matters.

As the settling process went on the necessity became evident of providing some definite system of keeping in personal touch with men, and the United Kingdom was, therefore, arbitrarily divided into a number of districts, in each of which was a resident agent who visited the men in the locality at intervals of about a month, reporting on their health, progress, prosperity and general welfare to the Central Office. The districts were grouped into larger divisions, each of which was supervised by a district superintendent.

The visits of these local agents were of great

value. They not only enabled us to keep in very close touch with all old St. Dunstaners and made possible the personal interest which we always took in every man's welfare, but gave us the opportunity of quickly discovering cases of sickness and need, which were relieved by grants of money or by some other means.

Visitors assisted very materially, too, in securing trade orders by interesting prominent local people as well as the principals of schools, institutions, etc., in the blinded men.

The monthly visits were greatly appreciated by the men themselves, for they afforded opportunity of talking things over and of obtaining experienced advice and assistance. Old times could be discussed, and messages received from, and sent to, old friends made at St. Dunstan's who were in the visitor's round.

In matters of pensions, insurances, in fact on all subjects which might be of particular interest to old St. Dunstaners, the visitors could give good advice, for they were kept well supplied with news and information from the Central Office.

As has been shown in preceding chapters, the trades and professions taught at St. Dunstan's fell naturally into two distinct classes—first, handicrafts like boot-repairing, basket-making, mat-making, joinery and netting, which involved the creation or repair of useful or ornamental

articles, and, secondly, the callings such as massage, shorthand-typing, and telephony.

Added to these was poultry-farming, the settlement and after-care of men who followed this calling being dealt with by a staff of poultry experts.

The task the blinded workman had to face when he left St. Dunstan's to start his new life was threefold. He had to obtain his raw materials, work them into saleable articles, and, when he had done this, find a market for his goods. Such a triple task is hard enough for the home-worker who can see, but is full of almost insuperable difficulties for the man who cannot. The first difficulty, that of obtaining good raw materials at a reasonable price, was removed altogether, for we purchased very large quantities of leather, willows, cane, yarn, wood of various sorts, string, twine and other raw materials in the wholesale market at the most advantageous rates, and handed them on at cost price as they were required by the blind workers.

Poultry-farmers were supplied in a similar way with best quality chicken foods, carriage paid, and at cost price, when this was advantageous to them.

Accounts were kept with the men concerned, and terms of settlement were made easy, and were sometimes varied to suit particular cases.

The blinded soldier was in this way supplied direct, at the lowest possible price, with first-class

materials, all of which had passed under the eye of an expert, instead of being put to the inconvenience of having to obtain his supplies from some local retailer, who might or might not, have provided him with the best materials, and who obviously must have made his profit on the transaction.

The main task, that of making or repairing goods, was left to the men themselves; for the training we had given them rendered them as capable of turning out good work as any sighted competitor. The blinded men were not, however, left entirely to their own resources, for a considerable staff of experts in each of the trades followed was employed to visit them periodically to give advice, and to ensure that the high standard they attained in our workshops was maintained.

Mistakes, which might have developed to serious proportions, were thus checked, and, where it was needed, advice was given on technical matters and on local trade conditions. This technical visiting, as it was termed, was found to be of great service, more especially in the first few months after a man had left us, during which time visits were paid at frequent intervals.

On the whole, blinded soldiers found no very great difficulty in disposing of the articles they made. The work was thoroughly well done, the materials were the best, and as a rule, local trade

was forthcoming from the very first, and developed steadily.

It was often, however, inevitable that difficulties should arise, but they were overcome by advertising a man's work, or by interesting local people in him.

Large, well-placed shops were established where goods made by blinded soldiers could be displayed and sold, the men being paid immediately on receipt of goods. Owing to the success of the men's local trade, the supply of goods to these shops had not at the time of writing equalled the demand made on them by the public. This we regarded as an exceedingly satisfactory state of affairs, for independent enterprise was to the taste of the St. Dunstaner, and had the added advantage of inducing a growing connection and of establishing a sound business. The sales depots, however, were always available, and whenever local conditions were unfavourable, men were assured of a permanent market.

Every article received for sale was critically examined by an expert, and only those that were well and carefully made were accepted. Little faults were noticed and the craftsman was warned not to repeat them. Instructions were given as to how they could be remedied and an expert visitor was sent, if necessary, to rectify the errors.

In the case of those men who had been trained as masseurs, shorthand-typists, secretaries and

telephonists, the department concerned itself with their general welfare, and made itself responsible for assuring their continual employment.

In these callings, too, care was taken to assist the soldier in every possible way by keeping him well advised of important inventions or discoveries in medical science or mechanics which might be of service to him.

A few men who had been unfortunate enough to have lost a limb as well as their sight, and were thus unable to take up any of the callings mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, were set up in small newsagents' and tobacconists' businesses, which they managed with amazing success. Often not only was the blind shopkeeper able to pick out from the carefully arranged piles on his counter any newspaper or periodical required by a customer, but he attended to the affairs of his shop, his correspondence and accounts in a most businesslike and practical way without the assistance of a sighted person.

From time to time I submitted to Sir Arthur detailed reports on the progress of the men under my care, which showed that the majority were making a good living apart from their pensions. Experience gained from noting the increase of earning capacity which came to men after they had been away from the Hostel for two or three years and had become more practised at their craft

made me certain that future years would show even better results.

The pension which was granted to blinded soldiers was a generous one, varying as it did from 27*s.* 6*d.* a week for a private to 42*s.* 6*d.* for a sergeant-major. To this was added an attendant allowance of 10*s.* a week, which was paid on Sir Arthur's recommendation to all men except those who had a sufficient degree of guiding sight. A children's allowance of 6*s.* 8*d.* for the first child, 5*s.* for the second, and 4*s.* 2*d.* for the third and each succeeding child was also granted to children born to disabled soldiers before, or within a period of nine months after, their discharge. The Pensions Ministry accepted no responsibility for children born to men after this time, so in September, 1917, the Chief started the Blinded Soldiers' Children Fund, which undertook to pay 5*s.* a week to every child born to a blinded soldier which was not provided for by the Government.

Shortly after hostilities had ceased a temporary bonus of 20 per cent. was added to all pensions, to meet the increased cost of living, and when this came about, Sir Arthur informed the men that all the allowance made to them from St. Dunstan's would conform to this alteration. It is, of course, impossible for me at the moment of writing to say whether this bonus will be made permanent or whether any other alteration will come into force.

The authorities were so impressed with the

thoroughness of our organisation that they allowed us to undertake the administration and payment of pensions to all men at the Hostel. This meant that we were able to satisfy ourselves that all blinded soldiers received their pensions and allowances correctly and regularly, and enabled us to clear up many difficulties and lodge and carry through many successful appeals where these were necessary.

The St. Dunstan's Savings Bank was a most successful institution. It was started because it was felt that many of the men who had no family responsibilities should be given every encouragement to save the money which they received in pensions while they were at St. Dunstan's and were put to no expense. As an inducement to depositors it was arranged that ten per cent. should be added upon withdrawal to any sum placed in the Savings Bank provided that it had been there for a certain minimum period.

This chapter, broadly, describes our After-Care system; it is impossible here to mention the many other means we adopted to place men on a level with sighted competitors. We combined the offices of a universal provider, an inquiry agency, and an employment bureau, and considered our broad task to be that of helping men to make a success of whatever work they undertook, and of caring for the health and comfort of themselves and their families.

The reader should note that the organisation is a permanent one, and that plans have been made to endow it financially and put it on a basis that it will always be able to look after the welfare of the men who were blinded in the war as long as any of them are alive and need its assistance.

The Council of the National Institute for the Blind, of which Sir Arthur is President, and of which I have the privilege of being a member, placed at our disposal a handsome site in the West-end of London, on which were to be erected buildings from which this organisation was to be controlled.

Space does not permit of my quoting here extracts from the many hundreds of letters we received from men, which told us clearly that this organisation was of almost unbelievable assistance to them. The gratitude of St. Dunstaners was unbounded and the tributes paid to the organising ability and untiring efforts of the Chief were unstinted. From all parts of the country we constantly received expressions of satisfaction and joy, prompted by the thought that the writers of them would always have this strong and friendly body behind them to smooth out their difficulties and make easy their road to success.

CHAPTER X

ROWING AND OUTDOOR SPORTS

At St. Dunstan's we attached just as much importance to teaching the men to play as to teaching them their work. If a man can play he can work. Nothing helps a blinded man more to forget his blindness than the discovery that he can still enjoy his hours of recreation.

The big lake of Regent's Park adjoined our grounds, and the blinded soldiers took up rowing with zest and keenness. It is the best of all exercises for one who has lost his sight, for here is something he can do as well as any one else. This is in itself a tremendous incentive, and an added joy is the feeling that one is reversing the usual order of things and taking some one about instead of being taken.

Any one who has ever been on the river at night knows that the enjoyment is not lost because it is dark. The exhilaration of the exercise remains; you feel the boat moving at each stroke, you hear the sound of the oars dipping in the water, the soft dripping from the feathering blades, the regular movement in the rowlocks. Merely to hear a boat

passing in the shadows of a dusky evening is a delight.

And so to the blinded man there is joy in being out on the water, pleasure in the exercise, pleasure in handling the oars, pleasure in the sense of movement, pleasure in the sounds that are full of pictorial suggestion.

No doubt the pleasure of idling in a boat on an evening of one of the glorious spring days, which helped so much to brighten the beginnings of St. Dunstan's—and particularly when, as was usually the case, the idling was in company with a fair friend—had something to do with the speed with which rowing became popular; but the earliest St. Dunstaners were soon to be found on the lake, early morning, midday and evening, for the sheer joy of the real exercise which rowing provided. Racing began and soon led to performances that created astonishment in sporting circles.

One of the best of amateur coaches devoted a great deal of time to instructing the men, other experts gave their help, and there was no difficulty in getting a sufficient number of coxswains. People who had come to row on the lake would volunteer to steer the blind oarsmen, and when it became the practice to row before breakfast, night workers on their way home through the park would stop to take the men out, and a little army of girls living in all parts of London regularly got up very early and came to steer the St. Dunstan's boats

TUG-OF-WAR

before going on to the shops and the offices where they worked. Inevitably there arose a certain number of romances, and more than one of the blinded soldiers found a wife among the fair coxswains who came at so much trouble to help them in their rowing.

To those who had never before been on the water the early stages may well have been disheartening. There must always be credit to the men for their persistence in whatever they took up. Ever there was the dogged resolve not to be beaten, and when once they felt they could make the boat move through the water they quickly began to pick up the instructions of the coaches. It might be necessary at first to guide the hands of the novice; feathering especially was difficult to master; but this and the straight back, the proper use of the weight, the pull from the shoulder, the correct balance of the head, neat effective finish of the stroke, were all acquired.

Keen indeed these blind oarsmen were, and soon the fifty and more boats on the lake were all in use by half-past six on a summer's morning. The arrival of the rowing-men at the waterside was an event in the afternoon that created no little interest among the frequenters of the park.

In their white sweaters and shorts they lined up in the grounds of St. Dunstan's; at a word of command they took a right turn, and then, with a guide at their head, and each man with a hand

on the shoulder of the one in front of him, they would break into the double, thread the winding paths of the garden and cross a little piece of the park to the landing stage, whistling and singing as they went. To watch the crews in training for racing embark, to see the oars taking the water in perfect time, was something for the loungers on the lakeside to marvel at.

Even before the end of the first summer at St. Dunstan's the progress was so encouraging and the men shaped so well that an interesting experiment was decided on. A challenge was sent to Worcester College for the Blind to row against St. Dunstan's on the Thames. Worcester, which has the Severn for its practice-water, has always been proud of its rowing; the challenge was at once accepted, and a date fixed for the meeting. Three events were decided on—single sculls, double sculls, and a four-oared race. So far as the last was concerned, St. Dunstan's was handicapped because at that time our chief practice had to be done in pair-oared tubs on the lake. But as the date approached the selected crew made several trips to Putney and were coached under racing conditions. At St. Dunstan's they were out every morning and evening, and physical drill, twice a day, was part of their rigorous training.

News of this contest between crews of blind oarsmen had spread, and when the day came there were crowds on the towpath to witness the races;

newspapers sent their reporters and photographers; a steamer was provided for the staff of St. Dunstan's and the men. Blind spectators of a race sounds almost as strange as blind men rowing. But the men who crowded the decks of the steamer were kept well informed of what was going on and followed the racing with the utmost keenness. I was one of them, and this, it happened, was my own first experience of seeing a sporting event without sight. I do not know whether blind oarsmen or blind spectators of their prowess discussed the events of the day with the greater degree of zest.

The order of events was: (1) Single sculls, ¾ mile; (2) double sculls, 1 mile; (3) four-oared race, 1¼ miles.

The Worcester lads in their smart athletic turnout attracted only less attention than the St. Dunstan's crews, and both were loudly cheered on their appearance at the waterside.

In the first event the St. Dunstan's man, a blinded officer, was just beaten at the post. But the two remaining events, after spirited contests, were both won by our blinded soldiers. Then the crews lunched together, silver cups were presented to the winners, and from that moment there was talk of a St. Dunstan's crew being one day entered for Henley.

Racing on the river became a regular feature of life at St. Dunstan's; we had annual regattas

of our rowing club, and constantly met and usually defeated other crews.

The Marlow Rowing Club organised several regattas at which oarsmen hailing from the different St. Dunstan's houses rowed against one another, and there were other events in which they met rowers belonging to the Marlow Club.

The leading four in 1917 was declared by good river judges to equal any four on the Thames during the war. They defeated a Putney crew of well-known river men by two and a half lengths on a mile course.

An amusing little incident occurred at one of the meetings of the St. Dunstan's Rowing Club. One of the competitors in a particular event had earned such a reputation as an oarsman that his victory was regarded as a foregone conclusion. As a matter of fact, he started so well that he was soon fifteen lengths ahead, and then eased up, sure of victory. But another competitor, who had slipped along under the bank unheard by him and unseen by his cox, suddenly dashing out, won a hard race by a length!

As numbers grew the lake in Regent's Park became all too small for our requirements though we hired all the boats on it, and every boat contained one or more eager blind oarsmen several times a day.

In 1918 we were able to organise a British Empire Single Sculling Championship among our

own men. There were fifty-five competitors, including: England, 25; Australia, 7; Scotland, Ireland, Canada and New Zealand, 4 each; Wales, 3; South Africa, 2; and 2 from other parts of the Empire.

There were at St. Dunstan's a certain number of soldiers who, besides having lost their sight, had lost also an arm. But even these men went in for boating, and so keen was the spirit of competition that races were held between the one-armed canoeists, while those who took up rowing did very well in pair-oared boats with a member of the weaker sex as rowing companion.

A deep debt of gratitude is owed to those who gave their time to coach and train the men whose lives have been made so much happier because of the pleasure that rowing provided—not merely a fleeting pleasure that helped to pass the time at St. Dunstan's, but one on which they could afterwards often fall back if their homes chanced to be by a river, or in a town with a lake in its park. At least up till now the rowing men have kept up their interest, and each year old St. Dunstan's men have foregathered from all parts of the country to spend a week's holiday training together to row in the St. Dunstan's Regatta.

Rowing was by no means the only outdoor sport which the blinded soldiers enjoyed. Competitions of many kinds were organised, which sometimes took place at St. Dunstan's, sometimes

elsewhere, as at the Botanical Gardens or at Ranelagh. At all these events the spectators watched with a sort of amazement at the almost reckless abandonment with which the men set out to win. At any form of race—running, hopping, walking, three-legged, sack or wheelbarrow—whatever it was, when once they had toed the line they sprang to the signal to start with an utter forgetfulness of their lack of sight.

When the competitors dashed off helter skelter, the onlookers usually gave a gasp of surprise. They had been expecting a cautious, feel-the-way travesty of a race in which the men would be seen groping their way forward, helplessly meandering towards the sound of the bell that was their guide to the winning post. But the St. Dunstaner knew no such method. Trusting in the whistle which told him that the race was ended and the breast-high rope which stopped him if he did not pull up quickly enough, assured that there would be no obstacle in his path, he made for the goal with all the energy of which he was capable.

Physical drill at St. Dunstan's was often given by sergeant-majors, blind like the men they instructed. It was wonderful to notice how they kept in touch with the movements and could detect by ear when a man was not keeping good time with the others.

Tandem cycling was a sport that gave great

delight—a sighted man went, of course, with each soldier, but it was always the latter who was making the pace. A cycle for six riders was regularly used, and it was a gay sight to watch the St. Dunstaners propelling this monster round the Outer Circle of the Park.

We tried football with a bell inside the ball, but the experiment never went further than causing some amusement. Pushball, too, was tried, but was not a brilliant success, for as the huge ball was twisted one way or the other the players got out of touch with it.

Wrestling was popular, and there was an occasional boxing match between men who were already accomplished with the gloves.

Swimming was popular, and the Marylebone Baths, not far from St. Dunstan's, were given up to the sole use of our men at regular times. Quite a large number of men who had never been immersed in a bigger piece of water than that contained in a bath learnt to swim. At first the superintendent of the baths was nervous that the men might come to harm by hitting their heads against the sides of the baths or running into each other in the water. But they had learnt to look after themselves. In a short time they were taking headers from the diving-board, boldly dashing from end to end, splashing and ducking each other and playing water-polo with a floating ball the progress of which they followed by sound.

At the beginning only some half-dozen men took up swimming; then its popularity greatly increased as men found they could learn to swim.

What a splendid form of exercise swimming is for the blind! What a wonderful sense of freedom there comes when one gets in the sea! Gone is the need of precaution, of ceaseless watchfulness! One strikes out boldly through the water with nothing to fear. A word now and then from a companion will keep a blind swimmer's direction—even the word is hardly necessary, for he can follow the movements of another in the water. And one swimming alone can hear and be guided by the surf breaking on the shore, and the shouts and splashings of the mere dippers. In a swimming bath there are always special sounds—as the sound made by the waste pipe in the corners—which help a swimmer to know his position. The locality of dressing-rooms and so on is easily learnt.

In the baths at a seaside resort where I often swim occurred one of those curious instances which show how difficult it is for a sighted person to realise how independent one who is blind can become, and at the same time the full meaning of blindness.

The attendant was an excellent fellow who always looked after me most carefully. When my swim was over and I approached the steps to get out he was usually at the top of them with the

RACE BETWEEN BLIND ONE-HANDED CANOEISTS

greeting, "There you are, sir. Four steps—one, two, three, four! Now you are at the top, sir!" Then he would pilot me to my dressing cabin and open the door with the remark: "There's your cabin, sir. Clothes hanging on the right—*looking-glass on the left.*" The curious confusion of thought which led him to suppose that a person who was unable to find the steps or to count up to four could avail himself of the services of a looking-glass always struck me as humorous.

In the latter days tug-of-war contests became very popular. They provided splendidly hard exercise, and there was very hot competition between the different houses for the cups and medals which were presented. Some well-known Army experts who had been invalided out of the Service coached the teams. Visitors were often astonished to see a dozen men earnestly engaged in a hopeless attempt to pull up by the roots one of the fine oak trees which adorned the grounds; but these apparently crazy fellows were just tug-of-war teams learning the most scientific way to make the best use of their weight and strength.

Encouragement to regular exercise is very important for blind people, because a man naturally tends to take less after he has lost his sight than before. It was for this reason that we encouraged at St. Dunstan's early morning walks and organised week-end rambles in the country.

It is curious how one thing led to another. The

popularity of rowing, though there were very few mishaps, encouraged practice in swimming, and it was to pay a little compliment to the lady coxswains that the first dance was given at St. Dunstan's. Dancing became one of the most popular diversions with the blinded soldiers.

CHAPTER XI

DANCING AND INDOOR AMUSEMENTS

THE blinded soldiers took up dancing with astonishing zest. How well they danced was wonderful. To me it was an immense satisfaction to find them participating in this new way in normal life. It struck people as a wonderful accomplishment for blind men, but what was more wonderful was the spirit that made them so eagerly take a part in this and other forms of amusement.

If the primary object of this book is to make known what was done for the soldiers blinded in the war and to record what these self-helping men did for themselves, I hope it may serve a secondary purpose as giving encouragement to others who are blind or may come to lose their sight. Thus in speaking of dancing, for instance, the important point is something more than the fact that the men could dance in spite of being blind. I mean that it was a genuine source of pleasure to them, a spontaneous outlet for that spirit of enjoyment which they found, after all, had not been lost.

When it was suggested that a dance should be

given for the lady coxswains there was an immediate desire among the men to equip themselves for the occasion. And so practice dances were inaugurated twice a week and the services of a teacher of dancing and her assistants were obtained. An order for patent-leather shoes was placed with a bootmaker; we left as little as possible to chance for the success of the occasion.

The dancing mistress discovered at once that the blind men should learn to dance in the position usually adopted by the lady in the partnership; nor did she find the task of instructing, by touch and by word of mouth, even those who had never danced before nearly so difficult an undertaking as might be imagined.

The blinded soldiers responded with amazing readiness. Their perseverance combined with their ready ear for rhythm helped them to learn quickly. A man who was having steps explained and demonstrated to him one evening would be gaily essaying the dance itself on the next with a partner who was bound to admire his zeal, even if she were a little doubtful about his actual performance. Square dances were tried but found impracticable. The Waltz, the Polka and the Barn-Dance, the One-Step and the Highland Schottische were in much favour, while the Military Two-Step ran them all close. Two extremely popular dances were the Valeta and La Rinka, which were full of quaint evolution and move-

ment, rather on the principle of the Mazurka with a touch of the old quadrille stateliness.

For partners the men had the willing help of the V.A.D.'s, "Sisters" as the soldiers always called them, and the lady coxswains, not knowing of the intended honour to be paid them, responded gladly to the invitations which were given them. As the time drew near there was practice nearly every night. Old soldiers who had expressed their contempt for dancing were to be found surreptitiously taking lessons in remote corners from V.A.D.'s sworn to secrecy, while under persuasion of the Matron the most unpromising material was stirred into peaceful revolution. And so all moved forward in growing excitement to the night of the Ball.

The programmes were printed, the floor of the big lounge was waxed, the guests duly arrived on that night, the band began to play, and then a strange thing happened. A few couples took the floor, but the bulk of the expectant and eager blinded soldiers stood at proud attention while the ladies sat rather consciously neglected.

The band was stopped—a little speech was made. It was pointed out that at a blind men's dance the ladies must seek their partners or there would be something of a deadlock. The ladies, thereupon, with much laughter and a little blushing took up their duties, the band re-started, and the floor was soon covered with happy couples.

But it must be said that there was a good deal to make the guests shy about soliciting a dance, for the blinded soldier did not hesitate to refuse the pleasure on occasion.

A girl, perhaps very attractive and accustomed to have her company greatly sought at such functions, would approach a St. Dunstaner apparently neglected. "Will you have a dance?" she would screw herself up to inquire.

"Who are you?" would be the probable response.

"I'm Miss So-and-so."

"No, thank you," would be the uncompromising retort, and the girl would swiftly retire, casting a glance around to see if her discomfiture were observed. Naturally she was discouraged until experience taught her that there was nothing personal in the refusal, the explanation being that the soldier was awaiting the arrival of a particular partner.

The first ball was an astonishing success; dancing became a permanent institution and was continued even in the summer months. Waltzing competitions were inaugurated, and what gave these a special interest was that some famous dancer would come to act as judge and distribute the prizes.

And then some one suggested the idea of a fancy dress ball. A costume dance for the pleasure of blinded people,—does it not sound an

elaborate mockery? But I doubt if any event ever gave more delight at St. Dunstan's.

I know of no better example of the fact that the loss of sight is a barrier which can be swept aside. The utmost ingenuity was displayed in devising costumes, the greatest pains were devoted to making them as perfect as possible. Not content with the dance, the men dressed up the next day for a parade in the garden. One of our blinded soldiers, a jockey by profession, appeared in racing colours; a horse was borrowed in order that he might be seen mounted in the photograph that was taken.

Every Thursday some famous military band would come to play at St. Dunstan's between twelve and one—it was then that in summer dances would sometimes take place on the lawn.

Famous singers, famous actors and actresses and entertainers came often to give pleasure to the blinded soldiers. Although the men went out constantly to concerts and theatres, so excellent was the quality of the entertainments at home that there was never lack of appreciation for them.

Blind people, by the way, can enjoy a play far more than might be supposed, though, of course, some plays are much better than others for those who are only auditors.

The revue form of entertainment, for instance, which was so popular while St. Dunstan's was

working, is not, as a rule, to my way of thinking, of great interest to a blind person, unless, of course, the music is of an unusually catchy description and the brand of wit above the average. A great deal of the success of a revue is apt to depend upon byplay and scenic accessories, which are to a large extent lost to the sightless "onlooker." But a good musical play, such, for instance, as those of Gilbert and Sullivan, full of tuneful songs and witty dialogue, is ideal. Any play which is well packed with interest and incident can scarcely fail to be enjoyed by a blind person, and has a really sound educative value for the newly-blinded. I always encouraged the officers who had lost their sight in the war to go to the play as often as possible. An intelligent companion, who with a few whispered words gives one a description of the scenery at the opening of each act and tells one of silent incidents like a listening character behind a door, will keep one quite adequately acquainted with what is going on. The picking up of the different characters by their voices, and the general appreciation of what is afoot on the stage by movement, intonation and other subtle indications, are, I always think, of real educative value to a person who is learning to be blind. In short, the theatre can be fairly looked upon as a schoolroom as well as a place of interesting entertainment.

The men of St. Dunstan's got up several revues

filled with local jokes and scenes, which were performed with immense success. It seemed that there was no end to the talent whenever concerts were organised from our own resources.

So excellent were the voices of some of the men that several were trained to become professional singers. There were many who played well on the piano, and lessons were arranged for all those who elected to go on with their study of music.

As there were violinists as well, and men who performed on the cornet, the trombone, the drum and the cymbals, a band was formed which came to give performances in public and was a remarkable example of what blind musicians can do even when their technical knowledge is limited. Some of the men played the banjo and the mandolin—indeed there were not many of them who did not entertain themselves with the help of some instrument from the piano or violin down to the mouth-organ or penny whistle.

Games of all kinds were played in the evening—chess and draughts occasionally, but not even cards were as popular as dominoes. The cards for the use of blinded men are marked at the ends with Braille dots and are recognised by touch practically as swiftly as they are ordinarily recognised by sight. Similarly the domino stones have raised dots which the men accustomed themselves to read with alacrity. Domino tournaments were a weekly event. At each table there was a sighted

referee, whose duty it was to call out the numbers to which the next player had the option of joining.

Those who did not play games occupied themselves with string-bag making, embroidery and the fabrication of woollen mats, read books in Braille, or were read to aloud. Little parties of a dozen men were often to be seen grouped round a V.A.D. who was reading a story to them. There was always a number of men who did not take part in any of the usual interests and yet never appeared dull. They habitually occupied the same corner or position in one of the lounges and indulged in unceasing conversation in all their spare time.

A debating club was formed among the men, and its meetings were full of interest. The number of good speakers was very marked. On the night of a big discussion the hall would be crowded with the blinded soldiers, and so many were eager to speak that the opening speeches had to be confined to ten minutes and the others to five minutes.

One of the objects of these debates was to accustom the men to speak in public with the idea that they might subsequently take their place in local councils. One of them—a Canadian—has, in fact, already been elected a member of Parliament in his own province.

The blinded officers took part in the discussions,

and as frequently as possible I occupied the chair.

It was also, as I have already mentioned, my custom to have talks now and again with the assembled men, and it was on such occasions that one was most deeply conscious of their high spirits and enthusiasm. There was about their enthusiasm something electric. When I had called for silence with my whistle, when I had greeted them with a "Good afternoon, everybody," when they had shouted their response in the rousing way which was their manner, there seemed to exist a sympathy that was like a glow; one felt in touch with these hundreds of unseen men in a way that words do not convey. There was no reserve to be broken down, no interest to be awakened, no question of holding attention—they were open-hearted, eager, intent. At the least excuse they would laugh and cheer. The men seemed to like these talks hugely; on me they had a most inspiring effect.

A number of public men, soldiers, travellers, men in touch with the affairs of the moment, were good enough to come to St. Dunstan's to deliver lectures. They never had more appreciative audiences. General Charteris, when Chief of Staff to Sir Douglas Haig, gave permission to various officers occupying important positions to come to England for the express purpose of explaining to the blinded soldiers various phases of the war. They were given lectures on aerial warfare, on

spies and the work of the Secret Service, on map making and reading, and explanations of recent events at the front. The men always liked to be kept well-informed.

Every day, just before nine o'clock, a whistle announced the reading of the morning paper. The men crowded round and every pursuit was stopped in order to listen. Those who were present said it was one of the most moving sights at St. Dunstan's to watch the faces of the men during this function. With the keenest interest they were all turned towards the reader, and there was immediate expostulation if any accidental noise arose to interfere with their hearing. The usual plan was first to read a summary of the war news and then to select matters of general interest. Readings were given, too, from the weekly papers —especially of humorous articles and jokes. At the end of this little function there was always applause.

It was just before the newspaper reading that a V.A.D. would appear in the lounge with the letters. There was a certain number of men who spent no time on letter-writing and expected nothing when the morning post arrived. But there were others who were always anxious,— delighted when their names were called, distressed and even a little distrustful of the distributing V.A.D. if nothing came for them.

The letters distributed, there arose from all

parts of the lounge the cry of "Sister!" and the V.A.D.'s whose duty it was to be in attendance hastened to the callers in turn to read the letters —not omitting the x x's at the end without which no soldier's letter seemed complete. Not infrequently did the Sister find herself somewhat embarrassed by the particularly private nature of the information conveyed in the letter; but the blinded soldier would take this quite stoically, very sensibly regarding the reader as only a mouthpiece.

Each house belonging to St. Dunstan's had its Matron, its Adjutant and its staff of V.A.D.'s. Above all, they devoted themselves to seeing that the men were contented and happy—happy each in his own way, I should say, for that is very important.

One who gave his time to looking after the men, writing of his experience, said:

"It is a common thing among the older workers at St. Dunstan's to declare that no newcomer is worth his salt until he has been there—daily, hourly, with the men—at least six months. There is more than a particle of truth in that assertion. Your recently blinded soldier or sailor is a very special study in himself. You must know from experience all the psychological changes which sometimes take place in his nature before you can meet them with, as it were, a counter diversion and thus eventually eradicate them if they

be unhappy changes, or increase them should they hold the elements of joy. The secret is love and sympathy—the deep, enduring, understanding, all-embracing love; the sympathy that helps a man upward and onward, and onward again until he stands at last equal to all other men. 'Equal' did I say? No, not 'equal', far, far superior. For he has fought and overcome an enemy, a tragedy that looks to us—we who have not been through the same silent battle—to be overwhelming, beyond hope of defeat. He has conquered it—and won."

St. Dunstan's was a place where the darkness that was inevitable was never allowed to pass into the gloom which is impenetrable.

CHAPTER XII

THE BLINDED OFFICERS

In the opening days of St. Dunstan's there were two officers who had lost their sight in the war, and were well enough to contemplate re-education. These I asked to live with me, for my home is fortunately not far distant from St. Dunstan's. But my house had only been designed for the accommodation of a small family, and not more than four visitors could be put up in it with any comfort. It was quite evident that accommodation would be needed for more officers than these, and just as I was casting about for more commodious quarters I was fortunate enough to receive from Sir John Stirling Maxwell the offer of his beautiful and spacious house in Portland Place, not much farther from St. Dunstan's than was my own.

This generous offer was most gratefully accepted, and here the officers and I transferred ourselves, while the spare rooms in my own house were used as accommodation for ladies who devoted themselves to the care of the officers who had lost their sight.

But all too soon Sir John Stirling Maxwell's large house became too small, and another house, almost exactly opposite, in Portland Place was rented. The accommodation provided by these two houses fortunately proved sufficient, combined as it was with the use of several flats in the neighbourhood which were placed at the disposal of married officers.

At Brighton, first one and then another large house facing the sea was taken for winter, week-end and general convalescent quarters, while during the summer months the officers spent their week-ends at one of the most delightful houses on the upper reaches of the Thames.

All of them went daily to St. Dunstan's to learn Braille reading and writing and typewriting. Some also acquired there the ability to conduct a poultry-farm or to become masseurs or shorthand-writers, while some took up carpentry as a hobby. For others special courses of study, adapted to the careers which they had determined to follow, were arranged elsewhere.

As with the N.C.O.'s and men of St. Dunstan's the blinded officers attacked the difficult problem of readjusting their lives to new conditions with the utmost courage and determination. Naturally I became intimately acquainted with them all, and a cheerier, better set of fellows I never can hope to meet.

All of them, I believe, would bear me out in the

statement that their lives were full of interest.

A great many very distinguished people interested themselves in them. Indeed a real difficulty was to evade with sufficient politeness the innumerable offers of hospitality and help which were made, for though brightness and happiness were looked upon as essential conditions of their lives, the sterner business of learning to be blind had to be tackled without too many social interruptions.

I think that probably if one of the officers whose sight had been taken from him were asked to say which were his happiest recollections of St. Dunstan's, he would recall the summer week-ends at Bourne End. The week-end house-parties were quite informal and exceedingly cheery. The weather, which perhaps does more to make or mar enjoyment on the river than anywhere else, was on the whole kind, and opportunities for exercise were abundant and as well varied as the circumstances permitted. I have already written much about the value and interest of rowing as an exercise for blind folk. The two big boat-houses at Bourne End were filled with river-craft of all kinds, and I do not suppose that a collection of boats and punts was ever made better use of. The blinded officers who had been rowers before they met with their disablement took up the sport again with keen zest, and many of those who had never rowed in their lives before became quite skilful oarsmen. An officers' four, which had the

good fortune to be coached by one of the great oarsmen of a former day, acquitted itself surprisingly well considering the comparatively small number from whom its members were recruited.

Swimming was a very popular amusement, and officers who before they lost their sight had never learnt to swim plunged gaily into the Thames and swam in waters which, thanks to the kindness of the Thames' Conservancy, were kept clear of weeds for them, the quarter of a mile along which our grounds ran being, I believe, the only piece of the river which was cleared of weeds during the war. The generosity of the committee of the Bath Club, which placed its beautiful swimming bath at the disposal of the officers, was the reason which enabled those who had never learnt to swim to acquire the art so well as to entrust themselves fearlessly to the wide reaches of the Thames.

Though the supply of horses during the war was limited, there were always enough to be obtained both at Bourne End and Brighton to enable the officers who liked riding to spend many happy hours on horseback.

Tandem cycling was another form of exercise pursued by the officers, and the wooded heights round Bourne End gave splendid opportunities for vigorous walks.

In winter, of course, opportunities for exercise

were more limited, and the generous action of the Hove Corporation in placing their fine swimming bath at the sole disposal of the blinded officers during certain hours of the week-end was thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed. The magnificent stretch of Downs which lies behind Brighton afforded splendid opportunities for the best kind of walking exercise.

Bridge was popular, and some of them played chess, while, as with the men, dancing was a never-failing source of enjoyment. One of the best-known and most popular teachers in London placed her services and those of her assistants freely and most generously at the disposal of the blinded officers, many of whom will have cause to remember with gratitude the trouble which was taken to perfect them in all the complicated manœuvres of modern dancing.

A very interesting and enjoyable feature of life in Portland Place was the weekly guest night. Each Thursday evening some distinguished person dined with the blinded officers, who on these occasions all met at Sir John Stirling Maxwell's house. I fancy that many of our guests felt a little uncomfortable when they found themselves sitting at table with thirty or so blind men, but I know that this feeling wore off almost at once, and that they marvelled at the ordinariness of their surroundings. They just found themselves eating a good dinner with a particularly jovial

party whose members comported themselves like other people did. After dinner we all adjourned to the room known as the Big Lounge, and here I know I can say without fear of contradiction the blinded officers spent the most interesting evenings of their lives. Some of our leading statesmen, great soldiers and sailors, distinguished men of letters and captains of industry, gave them informal lectures of an hour and a half or so after these dinner parties. The lectures were often followed by a brisk cannonade of questions to the lecturer.

Some women who have impressed their individuality upon the life of the day were among these guests, and though on these occasions the usual dinner rule of "men only" was observed, with of course the exception of the guest of the evening, the ladies who devoted themselves to the care of the blinded officers used to insist upon forming part of the after-dinner audience.

As I write, the officers' quarters are full to overflowing, as are the men's quarters at St. Dunstan's, and though it is not therefore possible to speak of final results, enough officers, as enough men, have left us to join again in the rough and tumble of life to make it possible to speak with certainty as to the general outcome of their learning to tread the dark trail. And here let me say that just as splendidly gallant a lead was given

by the officers of St. Dunstan's to their men as that which they gave them on the battlefield.

On the whole, I think perhaps their task has been the harder one, for the most annoying paradox in the world of the blind lies in the fact that the better the social position of a man who loses his sight, and the higher his intellectual attainments, the more difficult is it for him to re-establish himself, or to start business or professional life on a new basis. The man who worked with his hands when he could see can still work with his hands after his sight has left him, and, provided that he gains sufficient skill to do his work well, his reward is commensurate with his efforts. But the man whose work depended upon his brain, or who had been brought up with the idea of following some calling which did not depend for success upon manual skill, is apt to find the handicap of blindness a very serious one.

Surprisingly many people seem honestly to believe that loss of sight means diminished mental capacity, and appear totally unable to realise that, as a matter of actual fact, blindness improves rather than impairs one's mental attainments.

The manner in which some of the blinded officers continued to occupy important business positions which they had occupied before they lost their sight, and the way in which others succeeded in gaining positions which it would ordinarily

have been thought quite impossible for a blind man to fill, must have gone a long way towards dispersing gloomy views as to the capacity of intelligent people who have to work without the aid of sight.

A very brilliant example of the manner in which a man who has lost his sight can carry on in an important business position was afforded by a captain, who, before he joined the Army, was one of the leading spirits in a very large concern with ramifications stretching over the whole world. He occupied the position of director of the foreign and colonial part of the firm's business. He went back to this position, and this is what he wrote to me in regard to his work and the way in which he found himself able to do it:

"Just a line to let you know the progress I am making in my effort to forget I am blind. I told you some time ago that I was determined not to let it interfere with my business career, and since I left St. Dunstan's I have returned to my former position as foreign and colonial director of my company, and find I am able to carry out my duties as though nothing had happened.

"If I ever had any doubts as to whether such a thing were possible those doubts were quickly dispelled during my studies at St. Dunstan's, where I learned to read and write under the new

conditions. I also learned subconsciously that feeling of self-reliance and independence which is the seed of a blind man's prosperity. I look upon St. Dunstan's not only as a school of teaching, but as a school of inspiration, guiding the blinded soldier through that uncertain period when he first begins to realise his disablement and wonders what the future means.

"I have forgotten my disablement, and I am now able to live as active a life as I did before, for activity is the best way of forgetting blindness. When I come to think that I am only one of many who have been made to forget their blindness, it makes me realise more than ever the meaning of St. Dunstan's.

"As for the boys there, I think they are the jolliest lot I have ever met."

Curiously enough, the day that I was writing this chapter I received from the author of this letter another in which he told me that his fellow-directors had just decided to dispatch him upon a business tour embracing America, Canada, Honolulu, Fiji, Australia and New Zealand. The vast foreign and colonial export business of the firm had been most seriously impaired, in fact almost destroyed, by the war, and it was of the utmost importance that immediate steps should be taken to rebuild it. The fact that the emissary selected for this most difficult task was

a man who had only comparatively recently been obliged to readapt his life to the conditions imposed by blindness seems to me to be a tremendously significant and impressive proof of the truth of the ideals for which we strove at St. Dunstan's.

Let me give another example of the success with which a blinded officer returned to the work in which he had been engaged before he lost his sight. The following letter from him, I think, gives the facts without necessity for any further comment:

"When I left St. Dunstan's I promised to let you know how I got on with my business, and I know you will be interested to hear. As you know, I came back to my old business, but found that three and a half years of war had altered things very much.

"I confined myself almost entirely to the commercial side of the business. The whole of the correspondence now passes through my hands and is attended to by me. I keep in close touch with our agents and customers and am solely responsible for the buying of one of our largest departments. Although I do not wish to brag, I do not hesitate to say that I have a far better grip on the business now than in pre-war days.

"I have recently started a new business quite

on my own. I have obtained a Government contract for which I alone am responsible.

"I fully realise and appreciate the fact that without St. Dunstan's it would not be possible for men who have lost their sight to carry on in the way they are now able to do. I can only renew my sincerest thanks for all that you have done for me."

Officers who have been blinded in the war were, as I wrote, making good in other walks of life than commercial business. One was doing well as a masseur, with consulting rooms in the most fashionable medical district of London, and others whose massage training was well under way will, I know, do just as well as he was doing. Several were occupying secretarial positions in which the knowledge of shorthand and business routine they had acquired at St. Dunstan's bade fair to advance them to executive posts in the near future.

One officer, who had passed his examinations for the Bar before he went to the Front, was building up a practice in the Temple.

Another was doing entirely satisfactory work as a solicitor in his father's firm in a great provincial town.

Others were reading at Oxford or elsewhere for their legal examinations or for the Church, and an Army Chaplain, blinded at the Front, was administering the clerical affairs of a country

parish in the Midlands. He often preached sermons, which were greatly appreciated, in the Chapel at St. Dunstan's.

Another officer at the time I wrote this chapter had been for some time working at the Foreign Office, turning his excellent knowledge of German to good account by writing, with the help of a secretary, *précis* of German technical publications.

Quite a number of blinded officers had acquired a thorough knowledge of poultry-farming in its most up-to-date and scientific form, and were settled in different parts of the country pursuing this fascinating occupation with an abundance of both pleasure and profit. Results in this business must necessarily come somewhat slowly. The following extract from a letter written to me by one of the officers, I think, shows, however, that success should be sure:

> "I started on my business of poultry and fruit farming with 20 head of poultry and 20 half-standard apple-trees—egg production for retail purposes and apples for the market being my main scheme. I was soon enabled to acquire more ground and had by the end of the year reared a fine stock of over 100 pullets, and had planted close on 300 apple trees in the pens. I have again this season reared about the same number of birds, and lately planted another 90 apple trees. My project for next

year is to breed a stock of 400 pullets. I expect in a year or two, with ordinary luck and the above number of laying stock raised each year, and the apples from the trees, to be in a position to make a sum equal to my pension, and thus prove that a blind man can earn his own living at this branch of business. For labour I now engage two girls, one for poultry and the other for fruit and vegetables, both new to the work, being trained by myself, with occasionally an odd man engaged for heavy digging. Side-lines such as lavender growing, mushroom culture and bee-keeping will be in turn started upon."

I have referred in the "Foreword" of this volume to an officer who became one of my leading colleagues in the conduct of St. Dunstan's, and who decided to devote himself to the very important task of directing the complicated organisation which was devised to attend to the needs of men trained at St. Dunstan's during the remainder of their lives. Chapter IX of this book, which deals with this subject, is from his pen. I think that I need not say anything here with regard to the way in which he adapted himself to new conditions. The manner in which he tells of the work which he directs and of all that it means to the blinded soldier is sufficient for this.

No more striking example of the ability shown

by a blind man can, I think, be found than the following:

Among the blinded officers for whose future it was my privilege to make arrangements was a man who had never served in the Army, but whom I know I was more than justified in welcoming to the officers' quarters. In the letter in which I first heard of him, he was described to me by a leading member of one of the greatest chemical firms in the country as "one of the leading young scientific chemists of the day." While he was engaged in highly dangerous experiments with regard to the perfection of a new form of high explosive for military purposes, something went wrong, with the result that a terrific explosion killed every one else in the laboratory and left him blinded and apparently lifeless. His wonderful constitution enabled him to recover from injuries which it was thought must be fatal, and when he came to Portland Place he was a sound man in all respects but that of eyesight and a stiff elbow which yielded to treatment. He attacked the problems which confronted him with the utmost vim and persistence, and learnt his new lessons with quite unusual rapidity. The great firm for which he had worked promised that they would give him every opportunity of taking up a position with them again. Fortified with this prospect, he kept himself well abreast of scientific progress, and was given invaluable help by some of the

leading scientific teachers and experts who were working in London. He was welcomed back to the firm with the utmost kindness and consideration, and I received from him many very lengthy letters telling me of the work with which he had been entrusted and of the way in which he was accomplishing it. The brief extracts from some of his letters, which I append, cannot, I think, fail to prove of special interest as showing the manner in which a blind man can hold his own in pursuits which to most people would seem utterly beyond his scope.

"I have been given the supervision of all the Patents and the general control of Literature in so far as it affects the many aspects of the processes followed here. I am in contact with the many managers of departments and keep in touch with research which is going on here and link up ideas and correlate the views on research problems and difficulties which are in the minds of the various managers of the different processes followed here."

"I am now indexing and reviewing all the Patent Literature which we have accumulated in our Library with a view to making a synopsis of all the interesting ones. The actual filing and indexing can be done by my secretary, but the cross indexing and the synopsising must obviously be done by some one with responsi-

bility and scientific knowledge. All new Patents of any nationality pass through my hands and the Directors will only be required to consult those of possible importance to the firm. I have had a young chemist of promise on a clearing up of a difficulty which has been worrying our Caustic Plant for some time, and results are coming in. This is a comparatively little matter scientifically, but means a great deal in the economy of the Plant."

"I think I am becoming of more use to the various managers if I may judge by the greater frequency with which I am requested to get out information. I have got out one report on a research question and am engaged on another. The Patent work still goes methodically and I now receive Patents for criticism as well as for summary. This is, of course, an added responsibility, but is one which I am ready to assume."

"The Principal of the Technical Institute here was taken very ill about five weeks ago, and as he was a personal friend of mine, he asked me to take charge of two of his most promising pupils who were about to take their Honours Chemistry course at the University. Accordingly I am tutoring them, or lecturing to them three times a week, and this will probably continue for several months. I am glad to say that I have no difficulty in remembering my facts,

and as I am taking the most difficult section of the Science, namely, Physical Chemistry, I am delighted to think that the necessity for self-reliance on my memory has improved it to no small degree."

The blinded officers who have passed through St. Dunstan's up to now are acquitting themselves in a manner which must always be a source of the most genuine pride to themselves and to all who had a share in the delightful work of helping them to shape their lives anew. Their example will, I know, be followed to the full by those who were still in residence, and those who had to come.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEN FROM OVERSEAS

From those fine fighting forces of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland, men blinded in the war came to St. Dunstan's. In some early cases they were returned home before the advantages of St. Dunstan's had become widely recognised, and then came back—undertaking these long return journeys, then often perilous, in order to get the training that was making the life of the other blinded soldiers astonishingly different from the worst that they had dreaded.

We could put a good many of the Homeland soldiers back into the kind of life they were accustomed to lead. The man from the office we could send back to the office, the man from the shop and factory we could set up again in a shop or in a workroom of his own, where he could still be making things with his hands. But these lads from overseas had often spent their days on the prairie, on the veldt or in the bush, taking life in adventuresome ways—a free life in the open, riding a great deal, handling cattle or sheep or work-

ing on farms so big that the horizon could not confine them. Perhaps, too, the sunlight and the radiance of blue skies meant more to them than we of these cloudier climes quite understand. Certainly, the loss of sight cut most of them off exceptionally from habitual experiences, and in fighting their way back to a busy and purposeful life it had to be, in most cases, a life totally different from anything they had previously known. This fact did not dismay them. To me it was a great satisfaction to feel that we were looking after these men from overseas along with our own fellows, and that the fraternity of capable blind men which St. Dunstan's was creating included members from all parts of the Empire.

Many of them had never seen England; they came here for the first time after they had lost their sight. It was interesting to find how well they got to know London, and how they acquired a clear general impression of the country. They enjoyed life. They delighted in going to the theatre, to concerts and dances; they were generally keen on rowing, and the officers took up riding with great delight,—not quite the kind of riding they were used to, but there was still the pleasure of again feeling the saddle between their knees, and the horse's mouth answering to their hands. They threw themselves into things, and it was quite clear they were having a good time.

When a man from the Overseas Forces was

brought to this country blinded, I at once wrote to his mother or wife, or other relative if he had neither of these, a letter telling how my own experience had taught me that blindness did not mean mental or physical extinction, and giving as vivid a presentment as I could of the life at St. Dunstan's and its manifold activities.

And this letter was generally the beginning of a prolonged correspondence, so that the relatives of the blinded soldiers were able to know of the progress that was being made, though I doubt if ever they were prepared to see such proficient blind men as they were ultimately to meet when the home-comer arrived back in whatever part of our far-reaching dominions he lived.

I deferred continuing this chapter until I had paid a visit to Canada, the January after the war ended. One of my principal objects in crossing the Atlantic was to meet again as many as possible of the Canadians who had been at St. Dunstan's, to see the relatives of those who were then there, and to confer with the authorities regarding the best arrangements for the future welfare of Canadian St. Dunstaners.

I met a number of my old friends, and was delighted to find how well they were doing. In Toronto, for example, there was a non-commissioned officer who, as a canvasser in the employ of one of the leading Insurance Companies of the Do-

minion, was making a far larger income than he had made before he lost his sight.

This is a letter in which he told me how he made good:

"It is with a great deal of pleasure that I sit down at my Remington to give you a short sketch of my experiences in the business world since leaving St. Dunstan's. This was in March, 1916, and I carried away with me memories of many happy hours spent there. I know that I shall always look back upon those days with the same feelings and with the deepest appreciation of which any man is capable.

"The spring and summer of 1916 I spent at my old home at Digby, Nova Scotia, which during that time of the year is quite a gay little summer resort, and thanks to my training to fit me for normal life again, was able to enjoy to the fullest all that went on in the social and recreation line, much, I feel sure, to the surprise of many of my old friends, most of whom until I arrived home had not heard very much of the wonderful place I had so recently left.

"During this time, while waiting to leave for my real work, I devoted considerable time to getting back into business ways and meeting strangers, and was quite successful in a financial way in selling subscriptions for the Curtis publications, the Saturday Evening Post and

Ladies' Home Journal. This work gave me more confidence in myself and my ability to tackle the life insurance business in real earnest, for that was the work you advised me to take up again when I told you I had had experience in it. I have the greatest reason to be thankful for having followed your advice, but at that time I had no idea such a course would be so full of interest and good results as my past two and a half years' experience has proved.

"Coming to Toronto in October, 1916, I started to work in my business as a life insurance agent with the Imperial Life Assurance Company of Canada. The first four or five weeks were not particularly encouraging, for I did not get a single application, but I kept at it regularly every day, and it was with considerable pride that I finally brought in my first application. Since that time, while the going has not always been easy, I have steadily increased in my production with the company and have had far more success than I dared to hope for so soon after I made my first appearance in Toronto.

"I am now beginning to reap the reward of past efforts when I collect my renewal commissions which are beginning to show up in a very pleasing manner, and I have on two occasions made all the other agents look green with envy

when I brought in applications for fifty thousand dollar policies, which are real plums in this business.

"I have much to be thankful for and much to thank you and St. Dunstan's for. Good health, a profitable occupation and a happy home are a combination that many a sighted man is not in possession of."

In the same city a masseur was winning golden opinions for his skill and ability, and was building up a steady and remunerative practice. Another masseur who had passed his examinations in London with greater brilliancy than had any other St. Dunstaner—he came out second of the three hundred and twenty people who entered with him—I found employed by the Canadian Government to teach massage to blind and sighted students. The methods which had been in vogue before he had undertaken this work had been discarded in favour of those which he installed.

One of our poultry farmers was employed at a Government establishment near Toronto to teach poultry-farming to blind and sighted people.

It was indeed gratifying to find in this one Canadian city these admirable examples of the St. Dunstan's graduate.

Another and even more remarkable example of success had just transferred his energies from

Toronto to Ottawa, and for a curiously interesting reason.

When he returned to Canada he entered the employ of the Hydro-Electric Power Company of Toronto. It is a very large concern which harnesses Niagara and distributes the electricity generated over a wide area. Captain Edwin Baker, M.C., had not entered business life when he went to the War, but had passed through an electrical engineering course at Queen's University. He performed the duties which were assigned to him by the heads of the Hydro-Electric Power Company to their satisfaction and to his own. This is an extract from a letter which I received from him after he had been at work for a short time:

"Yesterday's work consisted of 31 letters of about one page each, and six pages of reports collected on the telephone from our various branches, done in tabulated columns and consisting for the most part of figures. The work is very interesting, and I don't think I could have found a more suitable standpoint from which to get in touch with, and acquainted with, this Hydro system. A great many people will not believe but that I can see, and they are all the more firmly fixed in this opinion when I sometimes tell them what they or some one else is doing. Our people seem quite satisfied with

my work, and only the other day Sir Adam Beck was congratulating me on my success."

I have no hesitation in saying that he had a brilliant career before him in that great concern, but an offer was made to him by the Canadian Government, which he felt he could not refuse. He was asked to make himself responsible for the settlement and after-care of Canadian blinded soldiers as they returned from St. Dunstan's, and when I visited Canada I found him a fullfledged Government official installed in an office in Ottawa, and very busy in effecting plans which would enable the work he had undertaken to be carried out with the highest degree of success.

Here, then, on each side of the Atlantic you find an officer blinded in the war making himself responsible for the future well-being of the men who lost their sight as he had lost it, and I believe you will agree with me that no plan would be likely to prove more appropriate and satisfactory.

I must not forget to mention that Captain Baker was asked to join in the great campaign which was held throughout the United States for the Third Liberty Loan. He addressed seventy-five meetings, many of the audiences running into thousands, and was an important factor in the raising of several million dollars.

Another splendid example of work for others is to be found in the young New Zealander who,

when he had re-equipped himself at St. Dunstan's, originated, edited and published *The Chronicles of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.* This most interesting little bi-monthly magazine was looked for with the utmost eagerness by New Zealanders in the trenches, and by their friends and relatives twelve thousand miles away. It was in great part written by its Editor who contributed several series of graphic articles detailing his experiences in the War, and the visits he paid to the Front and to the Fleet after he had been blinded. I hope that it may be found possible to continue the *Chronicles* in some form, but whether or no I feel sure that its brilliant young Editor will make himself a name in the world of journalism or of literature.

And now I must tell you of something which has happened in Canada as the result of the return of these blinded soldiers to Toronto. Their self-reliance and capability aroused the interest of many prominent people, among them Mr. L. M. Wood, who, after he had paid a visit to England and made a thorough inspection of St. Dunstan's and its methods, associated himself with them in forming the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, which is closely affiliated with the National Institute for the Blind of London, of which I have spoken earlier in this book. In spite of the fact that he occupied important positions in the direction of some very large business con-

cerns, Mr. Wood gave his services as President of the Institute and found time to really give detailed attention to its operation. Among the members of the Council of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind are to be found some of the most prominent business men of Canada who have joined forces with these blinded soldiers of St. Dunstan's just because they could see how much was waiting to be done for the Civilian Blind of Canada if blindness were treated on lines similar to those which had made of these men competent, self-respecting and properous members of the community.

While I was in Canada an opportunity was found for the principal officials of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, including myself—for I had been glad to fall in with the suggestion that I should be its Honorary President—to hold a conference with leading members of the Federal Government in regard to matters of the utmost importance to the blind community of Canada. It is somewhat rash to make prophecies in a book, but I have no hesitation in prophesying that the measures which have been set on foot and which had their origin in these competent men of St. Dunstan's will, as the years go by, effect a radical and most beneficial change in all matters relating to the welfare of those citizens of the Dominion who do not see.

Scattered throughout Canada and Newfound-

land were other St. Dunstaners, doing well in the world; among them a Colonel who had again taken up his duties as Head of a large College of Teachers, and a private soldier who had been elected a member of one of the Western Legislatures.

I left Canada feeling very happy about "my Canadians" as I ventured to call them in the numerous public addresses which I made during my visit.

I only wish that I had had time to pay a similar visit to Australia and New Zealand. Many letters have reached me telling of the successes of St. Dunstaners who have returned to these far distant lands, and as I write plans are in process of formation, largely under the auspices of the Australian Red Cross, which should prove as beneficial as those which are working so successfully in the Mother Country, and which have started so well in Canada.

The grit and determination shown at St. Dunstan's by the men who came from the Antipodes to take their share in defeating Germany's wild ambitions make me quite positive that they will be responsible for a record of success ranking with any other that has been attained.

All that I have said of the Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders who came to us applies equally to the South Africans. So far as their futures were concerned plans had been made

under most happy auspices, though at the time of writing no South African St. Dunstaner had left us long enough for news of his progress to have come along.

There was no difference between the blinded men who hailed from various parts of the Empire while they were at St. Dunstan's. All were animated with the same determined spirit; all attacked the problem of readjusting their lives with the same cheery resolution and the standard of achievement was equal with all.

I have every confidence in the belief that the whole of that Empire upon which the sun which these men will see no more never sets will benefit by their splendid achievements, for blind people are everywhere, and everywhere the ideals of St. Dunstan's can be turned to their advantage.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LESSON LEARNT

The test of St. Dunstan's, of the theories I had and the way they were put into practice by the men, lies in what these blinded soldiers make of their lives.

Before the fighting ceased the number of men already re-established in their homes was nearly one-half of all who had lost their sight in the war. It was therefore possible to form a very good idea of the way in which they were facing their new problems.

One by one they finished their training and went off to make the crucial trial of their powers. Broadly speaking, it may be said that 4 per cent. of those men who had lost their sight in the war were, for reasons connected with ineradicably bad habits or seriously impaired mental or physical health, incapable of making good in the world. With the exception of this small percentage the vast majority of men left St. Dunstan's sufficiently well versed in a trade or occupation to ensure them, with the help afforded by the after-care organisation, which is explained in

Chapter IX, a good living apart from their pensions. Very many of these men settled down to their work and earned as much as, or in some cases considerably more than, they had earned while in possession of their sight. In quite a large number of cases earnings were two or three or even four times as much as they had been in sighted days.

As would naturally be expected, not every man who left St. Dunstan's in possession of a comfortable pension for life cared to work with the utmost energy and vigour at his command. A considerable number of men who were earning comparatively small amounts were capable of earning much more: for example, an expert young cobbler living in the North of England called upon me one day when in London, and on my asking him how much he was earning he replied, "About £1 a week." On my telling him that this did not seem nearly enough, he replied, "I could easily make £2 a week or more, sir, but I have got my pension and attendant allowance and only myself to keep, and a pound a week more is all I want. If I get married, as I very likely shall before long, I shall soon be making £2 a week, and I think probably more."

Another typical instance of this kind was that of a poultry-farmer and mat-maker settled in the West of England. His wages as an agricultural labourer before he was wounded were 15*s.* a week.

On settling down in his native village he did enough work to bring his 42*s.* 6*d.* a week pension —which included the allowance for his child— up to 60*s.* a week, and was more than satisfied with this, as well he might be, considering that it was four times his pre-war income. He admitted he could make twice as much if he chose to do so.

A most satisfactory criterion of results may, I think, be considered a selection of the letters that I have received from the men themselves, and those interested in them. The task of selection has been a particularly difficult one owing to the multitude from which to choose. The letters printed must be taken as samples of very many more; indeed I could without difficulty have filled the space at disposal dozens of times over with testimonials just as striking as those which appear. To be sure, they would mean much more to you who read this if you knew the men, if you had watched them in the class-rooms and the workshops preparing for the real triumph over difficulties that the letters record. But from the putting together of these letters there will, I hope, arise a picture of what these men have achieved; weaving one thread with another you will get a general impression of them at their work and feel in the end that you have really seen the result of their splendid endeavours.

They are working on poultry-farms, in offices and shops, and in homes that often they have

never seen. Many are living with wives they have never seen and have children they have never seen. In writing to me they are writing to a friend whom they have never seen and who has never seen them. But we know one another better than people might suppose; the fathers' hands have pictured for them the faces of their children; they have no sense of strangeness with their wives or in their homes or the places where they work. They have learnt to be blind.

Some of the letters were written in Braille—the greater number were typewritten; and these letters which every post has brought me for nearly three years past, and which every post still continues to bring, have a remarkable similarity in their tone of optimism—the men newly started full of confidence and hope, others already settled down able to speak of assured incomes, of a future full of promise.

I have a most cheerful budget of letters from the men who have taken up poultry-farming. Here is an interesting report on the work of a man who is one of our oldest settlers:

"L. has got quite a model poultry-farm. He rents about an acre of land, situated at the end of his garden. It is well stocked with fruit trees which afford a pleasant shade as well as being a source of profit. He has surrounded the whole with high wire netting, very strongly erected, and has divided it into sections to suit the needs of

his poultry. In addition to the four strong sheds he had from St. Dunstan's, he has purchased three others. He has creosoted them over and lime-washed the interiors. There is a large lock-up shed in which he keeps his poultry food in well-arranged tubs. It contains his carpenter's bench, and on this he is able to make any appliance he needs. He has also three model hutches for rabbits. His incubator has worked well and he is especially pleased with the new hot-air foster-mother.

"His stock at present consists of eighty old birds and seventy-eight young ones; three large rabbits and two litters of young, eight in each. He has just sold a litter of eight at five weeks old; they realised 2*s.* 6*d.* each. The rabbits cost him next to nothing to keep, as he is able to get an abundance of green food for them.

"The apex of his triangular piece of land is well planted with potatoes, cabbages, peas and so on, and he has also a lot of sunflowers.

"It is marvellous to see how easily L. finds his way about his farm. He works very methodically, cleaning each of the houses out three times a week. I have never seen houses better kept, and the health of the birds testifies to the care and attention they receive. L.'s work is a great pleasure to him, and he looks the picture of health."

In the letters there is constant reference to the

ease with which the men find their way about their little properties. For instance:

"You will be pleased to hear that I am getting on very well with my poultry. I find my way all over my poultry-farm without any difficulty; in fact, I heard two men who were watching me say to each other, 'I don't believe he is blind at all.' "

A note on an encouraging beginning:

"I have just reckoned up my books for the first six months of poultry-farming. I find that I am £5 5*s*. to the good in cash, and I have raised stock which I have had valued at £40."

A poultry-farmer who came to see me at St. Dunstan's told me that he was earning between £3 10*s*. and £4 every week on his basket-work alone. This working of two trades together has proved a capital plan.

A man who obtained work as the manager of a poultry-farm reported that it was getting so big he would soon require help. He wrote:

"I have twelve poultry houses, including an intensive house for fifty birds and a laying house for the same number. So you can see I have plenty to do. I have had to give all the dimensions for the building of the farm, and it has made me use my brains a bit more than

ever in peace time. Had it not been for St. Dunstan's I should never have been a manager of a poultry-farm."

Another of the many soldiers who learnt poultry-farming at St. Dunstan's stayed on a regular farm during the summer months. His account of how he occupied his time takes only a few lines, but in these few lines is a whole volume of encouragement to other blind men:

"I make myself useful on the farm, as I milk eight or ten cows every day, as well as feed them and groom them. People round the farm say it is wonderful what a blind man can do, provided he has confidence in himself. I mend the boots; also many other everyday jobs I manage to do, simply by trying to do what may seem impossible for a man so situated."

Here is a letter from one man who has gone in for pigs as well as poultry:

"My birds are laying very well—my average from the 95 birds being high for the season of the year. I have already hatched off 52 chicks this year. In addition to the four houses which were presented to me by St. Dunstan's I have three others in use, and an additional three standing empty, so that I can put this year's chicks on to new ground. As re-

gards the pigs, I am roughly about 530 to the good, and stock on hand I value at £83. Since I started with the pigs, I have gone in for breeding; I have bred 72 and reared 55, and for a novice I am satisfied with the result."

I have spoken elsewhere of the very astonishing success of the masseurs. Here is a note from one of them:

"I am going on quite well at hospital, and have been promoted Section Commander. I am commencing attending lectures at the Liverpool University on advanced anatomy, physiology, massage, and electricity."

On these lectures he passed two examinations, coming out top of the whole list in both, with 90 per cent. of marks, although all the other competitors were sighted. He was asked to take charge of a new hydro-therapeutic department.

Another masseur has this excellent report to make—beginning with hospital work, he had started a private practice:

"New patients come along as fast as the old ones are taken off treatment. I am now in touch with forty-three doctors and nursing homes."

Several blinded soldiers returned from St. Dunstan's to offices in which they had been employed

before the war. This letter from the employer of one of them reveals the fact that, though he went back a blinded man, he was able to take up a better position than he had previously occupied:

"It is with the greatest pleasure that I am able to inform you that F. is doing, and as a matter of fact has done, excellent work since he returned to this office. I cannot speak too highly of the results in this case attained by St. Dunstan's training. As you are aware, F. was employed by my company prior to the outbreak of war, but had no knowledge of shorthand or typewriting. He gets through quite a large amount of work in a most satisfactory manner, the letters finished by him being excellent examples of 'how to turn out correspondence.'"

From a well-known engineering firm in the City of London came the following letter about one of the private soldiers who had again taken up commercial life:

"We feel sure that you will be interested to hear of the progress being made by Mr. W., who, as you are aware, has been in our employ for some considerable time. After leaving St. Dunstan's, where he had an excellent training, Mr. W. took up his duties in our office as general correspondent. The success which he made of this department has enabled us to extend the

scope of his duties, and at the present time he deals almost entirely with the general and technical correspondence, ordering, and also the preparation of specifications—the whole of this work, naturally, being done by dictation.

"We can assure you that Mr. W. has made the most of his opportunities, and his services have now become very valuable to us. As you know, at first Mr. W. had doubts as to the possibility of again taking up engineering work as a career, but events have proved the contrary."

A private, who besides being blinded was deprived of his right hand, was started in business as a news-agent. "I am making," he said in a letter, "far more than I ever dreamed would be possible."

Another who was set up in a tobacconist's shop wrote:

"My turnover for the last three weeks has been £25, £30, and £26 respectively. Considering that my tobacco business is as yet only eighteen months old, I think that is rather good."

One of the men who learned telephone-operating at St. Dunstan's obtained employment at a large London store, commencing with a salary of 35*s.* a week.

"I have a fairly busy switch-board," he reported. "And I think I am giving every satisfaction. I find the Braille-writer very useful for writing out the numbers."

A basket-maker who settled in Great Yarmouth wrote:

"I am pleased to say that I am as fit as I have ever been in my life, and health is better than wealth. I am doing well with my work and earn a good living. Each week I send my baskets to Newcastle, and those who I send them to say that they are the best baskets that they have ever had, and I have a standing order for all I make.

"Now, as to getting about. I get about exceedingly well, and when out with the wife I never hold her arm, and I never carry a stick unless I am out on my own. I do not wear black glasses, and get around as well as any sighted person. People here cannot understand how I do it, but my reply always is that it was the confidence that is taught to every man at St. Dunstan's.

"I had two visitors to see me from the Pensions Ministry, and they were surprised at the way I moved about my house and showed them my workshop, and they also remarked at the rate I went when I was out, as I still keep my

old corps' pace up, for the Rifle Brigade always marches four miles an hour."

A basket-maker who wrote to tell me that he was making a good deal more out of his work than his pension brought him in said:

"I am settled in my new home, and I do not see any fear but that I shall be perfectly happy and contented; and I do not see any fear about the future, for I am quite confident I shall be able to earn a good living and keep up a comfortable home in my new life. It is a new life to me, for I was in the Army ten years; what little I knew of civilian life I think I had nearly forgotten, and it is through St. Dunstan's good work that I am so fit and able to get on so well."

In selecting these specimen letters from among many others which tell the same story of self-reliant independence, I came across one from a basket-maker settled in Derbyshire, which is very characteristic of hundreds that I must pass by:

"I started work in the early part of May, and have been working steadily ever since. I am pleased to tell you that I have plenty of orders, and that my work appears to be giving satisfaction, as I get repeat orders. I am doing my best to uphold the standard of St. Dunstan's. I have found a ready sale for my baskets, and

have several orders for mats. I little thought two years ago, when lying in St. Mark's Hospital, that I should be able to accomplish the things that appear so easy to me now, thanks to you, Sir Arthur, and the instructors at St. Dunstan's.

"I do not allow my Remington typewriter to get rusty, and am still keeping up my Braille, being well supplied with Braille books from the library. I find my Braille writing machine very useful in keeping my accounts without sighted help, and this makes me feel a little more independent.

"I hardly know how to thank you for the benefit I have received at your hands, and I think I am speaking the truth when I say that I feel as normal as I did before losing my sight. I have to thank St. Dunstan's alone for this and for all the happiness and cheerfulness that I enjoy."

One of the basket-makers (he had hardly opened his workshop when orders came to him for fifty shopping baskets) carried on at the same time his old trade as a barber. There could hardly be better evidence of the confidence he had in himself, and the trust that he inspired in others. "He had learned something greater than basket-making at St. Dunstan's" (to quote an editorial note in

the *Daily Express*). "He had been taught that misfortune is not an excuse for sitting down and mourning one's helplessness, but the opportunity for demonstrating one's manliness. The customers were willing. So was he. He tried, and succeeded, and now finds that he can shave as well as in the days when he could see."

A cobbler who was established in Exeter sent me a characteristic account of his first experiences:

"I started well on the first day I opened my shop, and I have been busy ever since, and I have done all that is in my power to show the people that we from St. Dunstan's can do very superior work—thanks to the instruction we have received.

"I have been telling the folks around here what a wonderful place the Hostel is. They cannot understand all that is done there. . . .

"I have been in touch with another St. Dunstaner, who has kept a shop in Exeter for about ten months, and he tells me that he is quite well and very happy, and is getting on excellently.

"A representative of a local paper came to interview me at my work the other day. He said it was impossible for a blind man to repair a pair of boots, so I told him to wait while I showed him what I had been taught at St. Dun-

stan's. When I had finished he could hardly believe it was the work of a blind man."

For a report on another of our cobblers let me quote a paragraph from the *South Wales Daily Post*:

"The care and attention bestowed upon our blinded heroes are well exemplified in the case of a Brynamman soldier. He was so seriously wounded in the fighting that he lost the sight of both eyes. In due time he was taken to St. Dunstan's, where he was so well treated that he is still lovingly talking about it. He was there taught two trades, by which he now earns his living—boot-repairing and mat-making. At each of these he is now very skilful indeed, and gets plenty of work from neighbours and friends. He owns a magnificent typewriter (the gift of St. Dunstan's) at which he is an adept. All the mats that he cannot sell in the neighbourhood are sold for him by the authorities of St. Dunstan's. Before he joined the Army (he was one of Kitchener's lads) he was a collier, and, as he admits, not very well educated. Yet, by to-day, with very slight assistance from his devoted wife and children, he is able to face the future with an equanimity that strikes one with wonder, for he feels more cheerful and independent than ever he did when in possession of his sight. One gets a veritable education when paying him a visit."

Another boot-repairer, who has started work in Plumstead, said:

"I have now been in business for twenty weeks, and am going strong. You will be interested to know that I have just finished my 1,000th pair of boots. Of course, it is not all soleing and heeling. I have at the present time thirty-six pairs of boots in the shop; out of that number fifteen are repaired, leaving twenty-one to start on on Monday morning. I am working from eight in the morning to eight at night, taking a half-day on Thursdays, and usually finishing up just after dinner on Saturdays. I also do a fairly good trade in polishes, rubbers, laces, etc., and string bags."

The evidence of my letter-bag shows that the men have gained much pleasure through their knowledge of Braille. One man wrote:

"I am very glad to think I am now able to read and write Braille sufficiently well to enable me to make good use of it. Thanks to St. Dunstan's, I am beginning to find out that there are hundreds of things in life that are of tremendous interest. When I have a spare moment I turn gladly to the books that I took no notice of when I could read with my eyes."

And this:

"You will be pleased to hear that I am going on well with my work and find getting about quite an easy matter. I go from Naida Vale to the City every morning without any trouble. I have had several interesting books since I left St. Dunstan's, and have passed many enjoyable evenings reading them."

That time does not hang heavily on the hands of these men in their new life this typical little letter shows:

"I often wondered while at St. Dunstan's whether I should find the days long when I got home again. Such is not the case, for I never seem to have any time to do all the things that I should like to do; what with the Braille, the typewriting, the violin and the basket-making, I never seem to have a spare minute."

The writer of the following letter, who learned carpentering at St. Dunstan's, was particularly fortunate in the locality where he opened his shop as a picture-framer:

"Just about a year ago I removed to my present shop which is close to the School. It has also the advantage of being in the main street. Here I do a very good trade in picture-framing and supplying various other articles to the boys of the School, as well as to the residents of

Harrow. I consider picture-framing the best work. I have lately, in addition to catering for the wants of the boys of the School, added to my stock-in-trade artists' materials and colours, and they are going. My work keeps me very busy, but I have been able to go in for singing as a recreation, and find much pleasure in it."

From the wife of a blinded soldier:

"My husband is very busy indeed. He starts work early in the morning, and is often working until about nine o'clock at night, and I am very glad, too, as he is happy indeed when he is working and getting plenty of orders. The people in —— have been very kind to him since he came home, but really they are very much surprised at the way he does his work, and also at the way he gets about by himself, and when any of our friends see the cups and medals he has won for rowing and sports they are more than a little surprised. But then, you know, Sir Arthur, he just owes his good training to you and the staff of St. Dunstan's, and I am sure we can never put into words the gratitude we feel for all the good we have received from St. Dunstan's. It has made life seem happier for us in every way. Why, it is hard to believe that he is in any way different from myself, as he does little things for me now just as he did when he had his sight, and he is always so bright and happy and makes

every one else in his company feel very happy too."

From these fragments you can picture the life to-day of the soldiers blinded in the war.

From its indescribable horrors have come back to us the men disabled beyond power of science to cure. Among them the blinded. Had only a few of them found the brave spirit to set to work when they reached home that they might learn to forget their blindness, that they might learn to live and work like others, that they might learn above all to be happy,—that, I think, would have been astonishing. That practically, without exception, all the blinded soldiers should have done this, should have cheered each other—officers and men alike—in their united effort, and have won, is a tremendous fact.

CHAPTER XV

"ST. DUNSTAN'S REVIEW" AND OTHER MATTERS

ONE of the blinded soldiers unable to join in the recreations of the others and wanting a special interest suggested the idea of bringing out a magazine that should be a record of the happenings at St. Dunstan's, written as far as possible by the men themselves. In this way originated the *St. Dunstan's Review,* which began with the issue of a single typewritten copy, but soon grew into an established monthly magazine, with a considerable circulation among the men and those interested in their welfare. Conducted by this blinded soldier while he was at St. Dunstan's, it was afterwards edited by the blinded officer in charge of the After-Care Department and became a connecting link between St. Dunstaners in all parts of the world. As it developed, this little magazine became a complete record of events, touching on every phase of the life of the men. It was characteristic that their own contributions were usually written in a humorous vein. Thus they reflected their own brave spirit, for always they made fun of their difficulties. Look-

ing through the files one finds all sorts of interesting topics touched upon.

I could fill many pages with interesting extracts from the *St. Dunstan's Review*, but this book bids fair to be long enough without these.

Among the articles which I remember with a special interest was one entitled "Trouting by Touch," which was written by an officer who had been a keen fisherman in his sighted days, and who continued to throw a fly with great skill and success after he had lost his sight; an article called "Riding in the Dark" by one of the officers who continued to take a keen delight in horseback exercise, and another on golf for blind men, written by a private soldier who had been an expert at the royal and ancient game in days gone by, and who continued to derive a great deal of pleasure from golfing. While, of course, unable to play a round just as people who can see play it, he showed that a blind golfer can take part in a foursome which is played under rather elastic conditions, for there would obviously be some situations in which it would be impossible for him to take his turn, and a great deal of fun and good exercise can be derived from practice shots.

To each number I contributed a few pages, in which I dealt with matters of general interest to St. Dunstaners past and present, and in which I gave hints in regard to ways in which my experience had led me to believe blind people should

comport themselves. Many of these hints are embodied in earlier chapters of "Victory Over Blindness."

A monthly feature called "Notes on St. Dunstan's Men from All Parts of the World" told, often in their own words, of how fellows who had left were getting on, and proved, I believe, a very invigorating stimulant to those who were passing through the initial stages.

"Sports Notes" served to maintain the keenest interest in athletics, and led many men who had left to continue outdoor amusements with zest.

The various phases of work at St. Dunstan's were dealt with under separate headings, and men who had distinguished themselves in any way received their due meed of commendation.

The sessions of the Debating Club, and the various entertainments were duly noticed, and each number contained verses, grave or gay, contributed by St. Dunstaners past or present.

With a little selection of these I will conclude my survey of the *St. Dunstan's Review*:

THE YANKS ARE IN IT

"The Yanks are coming," was the song we sung,
"The Yanks are coming," and the Yanks have come;
They have been some time about it, but now that they are here,
Let's extend the hand of friendship, and greet them with a cheer.

The Yanks are coming! Yes, the Yanks have come!
With their rifles and their bayonets and their sticks of chewing-gum;

They're coming in their thousands, and it does you good to see
Those stalwart sons of "Uncle Sam" march boldly up the quay.

The Yanks are coming! They are right at hand,
From Carolina, Texas, Tennessee and Dixieland;
To Fritz it was a good joke when the Sammies talked of war,
But now that they are in it, he is feeling glum and sore.

The Yanks are in it, and the Yanks have hit,
Now they've given over talking and are out to do a bit;
The German Eagle's wilting, his day is well-nigh done,
For the entry of America is the exit of the Hun.

The Yanks are very busy, they are on a business trip;
They have reached the Eagle's feathers and are tightening up their grip;
The day seems not far distant when Peace may raise her head,
And Prussia's power and "Kultur" at Freedom's feet lie dead.

October, 1918. COLIN MCLEAN.

The author of the following lines said that he intended them as an embodiment of a thought which might very well arise in the mind of a person blind previous to the War.

THE KINGDOM OF THE BLIND

Who are you who come amongst us
In our Kingdom of the Blind,
Singing songs of home and duty,
Love and glory all entwined?

Who are you who come amongst us,
Strong of heart and hand and mind,
Daily striving to be useful
In the Kingdom of the Blind?

There is much for you to master,
Troubles too you'll surely find;

You are only little children
In the Kingdom of the Blind.

Persevere with good intention:
There's a way for those who will.
Soon, accomplishing your mission,
You may find a greater still.

There are many of your fellows
Who are yet to come this way;
You must guide them in their wand'rings,
Who have shared the bloody fray.

They will need you in their troubles:
You will better understand.
You have fought, and you have conquered,
You can give the helping hand.

Hardly seems it fair to ask you
Fight, when rest was surely due:
May the love that held your spirit,
Strength and courage now renew.

So, with many a manly purpose
In your Spartan souls enshrined,
You can make a mighty empire
Of the Kingdom of the Blind.

April, 1918. "CHARTAGH."

This parody on Kipling's famous poem was written by one of the blinded officers.

THE BLINDED SOLDIER'S "IF"

If you should lose your sight while all about you
Are keeping theirs, as soldiers often do;
If you're alive when Huns have tried to rout you,
And do not grumble when all's lost to view;
If just at first you find the darkness baulking,
And do not think you're in the great Unknown;
If when you hear the nice girls round you talking,

You think the place is yours, and yours alone;
If you can walk on pavements without tripping,
And mounting kerbstone, fall not on your nose;
If you can keep your calm when something's dripping,
Although you're wondering if it rains or snows;
If sometimes when you're dressing you are hurried,
And beat all previous records with your swears;
If you can hunt about and not get flurried
For twenty minutes while you find the stairs;
If you can work at dots, and not go dotty,
And soon become an expert with your Braille—
And if the war reports get very knotty,
Your fingers read them in the *Daily Mail;*
If you can type in type not too confusing,
(Of course, you can't correct the stuff yourself);
If with the nails and hammer you are using
You can make what may be taken for a shelf;
If you can keep some hens, and never scare them,
Of eggs you'll find you need not fear a dearth;
If you can mend old boots, and people wear them,
You'll feel you've made your mark upon this earth.
If you get lost, make casts like any huntsman's;
If you feel hopeless in the dark, don't mind,
For when you've been a few months at St. Dunstan's,
You'll be a man, old chap, although you're blind.

March, 1917. H. B.

MY FRIEND

Between the wards called Nine and Ten
A place for clothes is kept.
From one 'tis Birt, the other Ben,
And it is cleanly swept.
It is within this cozy place
That I embrace my friend;
And though I have not seen her face
I'll love her till the end.
Don't think that she is doing wrong
In letting me embrace her;
My love for her is very strong,
But ne'er in harm would place her.
I love my charming little friend,
And though no gladiator,

I'll fight for her until the end—
My friend, the Radiator!

September, 1917. "THIRD RESERVE."

People often ask me my views on the comparative disadvantage of blindness and deafness. A friend of the late Earl of Leicester once told me an interesting fact about him. Lord Leicester was at one time of his life quite blind for five years. He recovered his sight as the result of an operation, but unfortunately, in his later days, he lost his hearing. His friend said to me that Lord Leicester had often told him that, from his personal experience of both handicaps, he considered the loss of sight much the lighter of the two. I am sure there is no doubt at all about this. Deaf people are cut off from the world in a manner which, fortunately, does not apply at all to us, and they are in many ways far less fitted to carry on normal life than are blind folk.

I am also often asked what are the main disadvantages of blindness, and whether I consider that there are any advantages.

The greatest disadvantage is unquestionably the loss of one's independence. This lost independence, which at first seems so hopeless of recovery, is regained in very large measure as time goes on. Ability once more to read, to conduct one's correspondence, and to get about with ease and certainty in fairly familiar surroundings,

are all of them things which tend to a feeling of recovered independence. But even to those who readjust their lives most rapidly and skilfully real independence must always be denied, though, after all, blind people are not so terribly singular in this respect as at first blush seems to be the case, for all members of a civilised community are more or less dependent upon one another. The baker depends upon the butcher, the butcher upon the baker. So the dependence of a person without sight is not so much unique as it is exaggerated.

Inability to see what is going on around one, to rejoice in the beauty of unfamiliar scenery, and to read emotions on the faces of those with whom one comes in contact, are all of them losses which may be to a large extent made up for by visualisation, and which are remedied in a wonderful degree by use and custom.

A typical small aggravation occurred to me the day before I dictated this paragraph. It was to find myself obliged to take off my thick winter gloves when it was inconvenient to do so in order to discover the time by feeling the face of my watch.

First among the advantages of blindness I would place the unquestionably improved mentality which is quite sure to result. The average human being takes himself as he finds himself and leaves it at that. For much of his time his doings

are practically automatic. It costs him no effort of thought to dress, to eat, to move about, but when blindness comes upon a man all this automatic freedom goes. Practically every action of his life demands thought, and closely concentrated thought at that. This continual mental exercise, this necessity for making the very most of all indications which help one to be normal, has unquestionably a stimulatingly beneficial effect upon the brain, while the increased necessity for exercising the memory tends to greatly improve that most valuable faculty.

As the years roll by this necessity for constant thought becomes less and less, but by the time this stage is reached the mental improvement has been effected, and I am quite certain that almost every man who passed through St. Dunstan's would agree with me that from the mental point of view he is a far superior human being to the one he was when he possessed his sight.

It must please be remembered by those who read this book that the points of view set forth are those of a person who has lost his sight in adult life. Though in many cases they refer equally to people who have always been blind or have lost their sight so early in childhood that no definite recollection of the world remains, in many cases they do not.

And here let me correct a popular fallacy in regard to being "born blind." As a matter of

fact no more people are born blind than are born without arms or without legs. Nearly all of the so-called "born blind" people really lost their sight in early infancy.

Very often people who have been practically always blind possess a knowledge of the world and the things in it, which they have never seen, quite surprising in its accuracy, but at the same time it is plainly impossible that they should really know the world as it is known by people who can see.

What, for instance, of a world without colour? And yet the world must ever be colourless to those who have practically always been blind. For quite obviously they can have no real impression of colour.

I remember talking about this to a very intelligent middle-aged man who had lost his sight when a few weeks old. He told me that he thought he knew a great deal about colour, and continued, "White to me seems a soft gentle colour; black a mournful sad colour, and red a fierce colour," and then he paused.

"And about the other colours?" I asked.

"Well," said he, "that is all *I* know about colour."

The views he had with regard to white, black and red are, of course, too obvious to require comment.

An oculist once told me of the case of a woman

about thirty years of age, who had been blind from earliest childhood, and whose sight was restored as the result of an operation. He described her as a very bright, intelligent individual. When the bandages were finally removed from her eyes she was in a room which contained one window. The sun was shining brightly outside, and three sparrows were hopping about on the window-sill. The first words which fell from her lips were, "Why, look at those three candle-flames." Presumably the brilliant sunshine seemed to her like a flame; she had no doubt heard of the dancing flames and thus associated the little hopping sparrows with the light.

But imagine how unreal the world must have been to a mind which could imagine a sparrow as a candle-flame!

A friend of mine told me that he had once taken a little blind boy for a walk in the country. They met some cows, and it transpired that the blind boy knew that a cow had four legs, but thought that they were like his own. Why should he not? But how oddly unreal his mental picture of a cow!

I hope that not long after this book is published every school for blind children in the kingdom will have a most ample supply of models of all the more common objects in the world, for it is only by the sense of touch that people who have

never possessed their sight can form an idea of objects as they really are.

In very many ways people who have practically always been blind are tremendously in advance of those who lose their sight so late in life that a definitely real impression of the world remains with them. When other senses and perceptions than sight have always had to be relied upon they naturally acquire a degree of usefulness which it is impossible to expect in the case of senses which have for a lesser or greater number of years been dominated, and as it were suppressed, by the overpoweringly useful sense of sight. But as the illustrations which I have just given show, people who have not always been blind are in many ways in an immeasurably superior position to those who have always had to live their lives without the aid of vision.

The subject of the dreams of blind men is interesting. In my dreams I am never blind. Then I see as I used to; and if I dream of something bringing in people whom I have only known since I lost my sight, they are, unless I have become very intimately acquainted with them, people whose faces are indistinct, though somehow I know who they are. I have never dreamed about a place that I did not know before I was blind. I am reminded of the story of Milton, who, on saying "Good night" to his daughters, added: "May it, indeed, be as good to you as to me. You know

night brings back my day; I am not blind in my dreams."

Notes on this subject published in the *St. Dunstan's Review* produced evidence which convinced me that many of the blinded men had shared my experience.

In regard to the dreams of those who have always been blind an old journalistic friend of mine sent me the following note:

"Years ago, when in New York, I was writing a series of articles on the general topic of dreams, and the idea came to me that it would be interesting to know what 'always blind' people dream about. I made many inquiries, and saw a great many blind people. The net result, which, doubtless, you already are familiar with, was to learn that this class of blind people seldom dreams at all. I have heard people say how interesting it would be to know what 'always blind' people see in their dreams. Of course, I quickly learned that they do not 'see' anything. One professor of mathematics told me that the nearest he came to understanding what I meant by 'seeing' was that a brass band was red in colour! Some of the people I saw confessed to having nightmares, and the dream was almost identical in each case; that of being pursued by a wolf or a bear (which they knew by its barks and growls), and being chased

up a tree. The net result of all my investigations at the time was that no one ever dreams of anything that is not somehow connected with something previously seen, or heard about, or experienced."

One of the soldiers told me of a very remarkable coincidence in connection with his injury. When his battalion was lying in reserve on the Arras front he found an old magazine in a disused trench. It was almost unreadable owing to the mud that smeared it, but in the readable part was an article on St. Dunstan's, which as a matter of fact I had written. He had never seen a soldier blinded. The next day his battalion advanced, and almost at once he heard from one of his comrades that their captain had been severely wounded in the face, and that it was thought he would be blind. During a short rest the man who told me this story took the opportunity of relating to his comrades what he had read in the magazine about St. Dunstan's. Later in that day, as he sprang over a parapet, a shell from a German field gun burst among three men, killing the other two, and blinding him.

The officer and the private afterwards met each other at St. Dunstan's.

Visitors in the Hostel were generally surprised to notice that the habit of smoking was almost universal among the men. The idea that blind

people find no enjoyment in tobacco is one of those odd little pieces of misinformation which, in some extraordinary way, get repeated until almost every one accepts them as true. Certainly one of the pleasures of smoking is lost to one who cannot see the smoke, yet it remains not only a pleasure but a solace to the blinded man. At St. Dunstan's the men smoked at work as well as at other times. Pipes were not commonly used; it was the cigarette that was popular.

One very delightful feature in the record of St. Dunstan's is the number of marriages that took place. Many St. Dunstaners were of course married men and before the end of the war more than three hundred bachelors had found wives for themselves—very delightful and charming wives as I know for I have met them all. Some of them were sweethearts of earlier days, but many romances arose, as I have already remarked, from the companionships that were formed at the dances, or during outings on the lake, or walks, or the hours of study. They often married those who had helped them while they were making that manly, unfaltering struggle at St. Dunstan's, that heroic effort which among many other results made it possible for them happily to form their plans for setting up homes of their own.

With what they could count on earning from the trade they had mastered added to the pensions they received they could think of marriage with

a comfortable feeling of security—all the more so because of the existence of a fund I had raised to provide a weekly allowance for any children that might be born to the blinded man after his discharge from the Army, and therefore not included under the scheme of allowances made by the Pensions Ministry. Marriage was clearly the happiest fate that could befall these young blinded soldiers; and there is true romance in the contrast between these two scenes—the first arrival of the very helpless man, most doubtful of his powers to make anything of life, mistrustful in that strange, dark world where he had been thrust without sight of person or things, and the day, less than a year later, when he set out with his gay wedding party from St. Dunstan's—happiness, self-reliance and skill in workmanship, and ability to enjoy pleasure gained, endued with the proud sense of victory over blindness.

I must not omit a reference to Sunday at St. Dunstan's. This was essentially a day of rest, and to emphasise the fact we had breakfast half an hour later. The newspaper was read as on other days directly after breakfast, but to a much smaller number of men as all those who lived in or near London had gone home for the week-end, and many others had gone to friends or to one of the sea-side annexes. At 9.15 the Roman Catholics flocked down to attend Mass, followed by Benediction, in their Chapel, while services of the An-

glican and non-conformist denominations were held later. Choirs were composed of Sisters and men from the various houses, and the rest of the congregations joined very heartily in the well-known hymns. After Service, and if the weather permitted, most of the men went for a walk. Sunday was a great day for polishing off letters and a man often remained firmly tapping at a typewriter till he had finished five or six long epistles, while others would make their way to the Outer Lounge, and sit in comfortable armchairs round the big fire, or in the summer under the mulberry tree on the lawn. By three o'clock the Lounge was almost cleared again except for about half a dozen men to whom the Sisters read aloud. Some of the men went out to tea and supper with friends or visited other men still in Hospital, while some went to parties arranged for them by St. Dunstan's. Nearly every Sunday some of the musical men, accompanied by one of the Sisters, attended the concerts at the Albert Hall and another party set off for the Service held at St. Martin's Church for men and women in uniform. Another favourite Sunday occupation was to get on top of a 'bus and go out into the country. From the 'bus terminus an hour's walk through lanes and over stiles took the party to a farmhouse where the mere whisper of the words "St. Dunstan's" produced eggs, home-made scones, jams and cream, and

after eating a huge tea all the animals on the farm were inspected, and a chat in the sitting-room of the kind people who owned the farm was followed by a late return to St. Dunstan's.

It will make, I think, an interesting finish to this chapter to quote the impressions of a few of the many distinguished people who visited the blinded soldiers. To give these few is in a sense to give many, for in a multitude of other letters which I have received from well-known visitors is expressed the same tribute to the dauntless spirit of these men.

No one was more interested in what he saw or more deeply moved than Lord Kitchener, who frequently spoke afterwards of the afternoon he spent going over the workshops and class-rooms.

General Sir William Robertson, when Chief of Staff, also paid a visit to the Hostel. "St. Dunstan's is a remarkable testimony of British grit," he wrote afterwards. And he spoke of being struck not only by the determination and fortitude of the men but by the devotion of the voluntary helpers, the keen and affectionate interest they took in their work.

In the same way the Rt. Hon. John Hodge, then Minister of Pensions, was impressed by the way in which the blind instructors passed on their knowledge to their blind pupils. To quote from a letter:

"My visit has been of a most interesting character. I have gone through all the various departments, seen the men at work and have admired the dexterity with which they have learned their various occupations. It has also been a source of gratification to see the patience which the various instructors bring to bear upon their task. Another feature is the cheerfulness of the whole of the men. I have chatted with quite a number and have been delighted to hear from their own lips how pleased they are they have recovered from the first effects of loss of sight and that they now feel there is a future before them."

Lord Derby, after spending an evening with the blinded officers, wrote:

"I have never been so impressed in my life as I was with the cheerfulness of everybody there."

He came, too, when Secretary for War, to go over the Hostel. "I shall never forget my visit to St. Dunstan's," he wrote, afterwards, "and the extraordinary pluck, courage and cheerfulness shown by all its inmates, their absolute belief in the final triumph of the Navy and the Army, their willing sacrifice of the greatest gift the Almighty can give—the power of sight—and their determination under their handicap to still make themselves useful members of society, was a lesson to all of us."

The Hon. Sir Arthur Stanley, Chairman of the British Red Cross Society, also spoke of the wonderful cheerfulness of the blinded officers.

"I went to Portland Place," he wrote, "full of worries that I had had during the week and inclined to be sorry for myself, but all feelings of that kind vanished amid the cheerfulness of those who had so much more reason to complain than I had."

"After a visit to St. Dunstan's," wrote Mr. Charles Marriott, "I am inclined to say that only the blind really see. Or if that is putting it too strongly, that the rest of us have to learn from them how to use our eyes. At any rate, 'blind leaders of the blind' will never again mean anything to me but a proverb of human helpfulness."

CHAPTER XVI

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE BLINDED SOLDIER

BY RICHARD KING HUSKINSON

I CONTRIBUTE this chapter to "Victory over Blindness" as one who for nearly four years has been very closely associated with the blinded sailor and soldier, not only in hospital—where, in many cases, the men do not fully realise their blindness—but afterwards, when they have been home and become inmates of St. Dunstan's, and also, later on, when the full realisation of their handicap has come to them.

As I said, while in hospital the blinded sailor or soldier often scarcely realises that he is blind. The relief of being home; the comparative comfort and attention of hospital life; the many kind people who come to see him and cheer him up—all make realisation difficult at first. Not only that, but the men are, as a rule, put in wards reserved solely for eye cases—and, where all are suffering from the same handicap, it is extraordinary how much easier it is for any of us to forget that things are not quite normal with us. Oc-

casionally, however, certain blinded men realise only too clearly the misfortune that has befallen them as soon as they have been wounded, and, strangely though this may read, these cases are often the easier to deal with later on when the need for help is most necessary.

It may be granted from the beginning that almost every blinded man goes through his "bad period" some time or other. Sometimes a man goes through it when he arrives home and wife and relations and friends sit round him to bewail his and, in many cases, as they inform him, *their* misfortune. Others realise it as soon as they first arrive at St. Dunstan's, when, during the first few weeks, the number of people around them, the size of the place, the certain loneliness which must necessarily come upon them amid new surroundings far away from the voices and places they know so well, all may tend to depress them. Otherwise—and these are the saddest cases of all—some only begin to feel their blindness when they leave the society of the jolly crowd at St. Dunstan's and start to make their way in life as men working "on their own" in a world of other men.

Certain it is, however, that some time or other —maybe for a long period, generally for quite a short one—the blinded man has to go through his "bad time." And this is the moment when every available outside help is required. Also, it may here be said that the greatest difficulty which the

recently blinded men have to contend with during this depressing period is to encounter the right man or woman with the "right" point of view. They may find a dozen who will mingle their tears with their own, where they will only find one who will make them laugh. Here, let me add for the benefit of those who would help the blinded man through this "bad time," one of the easiest pitfalls, but also one of the most disastrous, is to let the blind man perceive that your cheerfulness is, as it were, cheerfulness with a very definite object.

In our own troubles, do we not find that the quickest way to forget them is to go right away from anything and every one who may remind us of them? It is the same with the blinded man and his misfortune. His greatest need is to be treated *normally* in his abnormal circumstances. It is his greatest need; it is also his greatest difficulty. Above all, he resembles you and me in our troubles in that, when his depression has, as it were, reached the crisis, he is best left alone altogether. Depression is like almost every other disease, it has its period of incubation, its "crisis" and its convalescence. Were the "crisis" never to pass away, the man must necessarily go mad and death would be the only way out—and this applies to our own depression of spirits just as much as to that of the blinded sailor or soldier. During the crisis, all that is needed are care and

unobtrusive kindness—the worst will pass sooner or later; there is nothing to be done *actively* until it is gone.

To prevent these fits of depression coming on; to help to bring forgetfulness when the weight of the misery is being lifted by Nature—this is all that the outside world can do to help the blinded man in his misfortune.

And this brings me back once more to that great difficulty which all blinded men seem to meet—the difficulty of being taken normally and not as some abnormal subject for whom only abnormal methods are possible. I would like to write up, in letters a mile high, in the houses where blind men live, the words: *"Try your best to make the blind man forget that he is blind by trying to forget it yourself."* By this I do not mean to say, of course, that the person who is looking after him must let him learn wisdom by doing nothing to help him at all. There are certain things which the blind man cannot do for himself and which you must do for him. He will realise these things just as you, who seek to help him, will realise them too. He will come to you for help almost unconsciously, just as you will be there—almost unconsciously too—to proffer your aid. After a short time these facts will be realised by you both, and will become so much a matter of course that, if there be any danger at all, it will lie in the helper's forgetting himself so far as to proffer the same

help to people who possess their normal sight. But until these aids become unconscious, both on the part of the blinded man and on the part of the man or woman who would help him, the blind man will always be reminded that he cannot see. It is for those who help to realise as quickly as they can that the greatest aid which any one can render a blind man is to make him forget his blindness. There are so many people who seem to show by their actions that they verily believe that, when a man loses his sight, he also loses his hearing, his reason and his whole individuality. It is quite a common occurrence for me to be asked if Mr. So-and-So takes sugar in his tea when, all the while, he is there to be asked. Happily, most blind men can laugh at such ignorance, but one never knows how deeply this lack of tact may scar the heart behind the laughter. And that is why it is so important that this perpetual reminding, by stupid little tactless acts and words, should be stamped out from the very first. Strange as it may sound to the uninitiated, it is far better to do too little in the way of the "helping hand" than too much. It is dreadful when the blind man comes to some hurt through his blindness, but it is better that he should occasionally receive some hurt than that he should never venture to go out and do things "on his own." And if you must help him now and then—as, of course, you must—make your helpfulness as unobtrusive as

you possibly can. Do not advertise it to the world. The man who makes his blindness known to all and sundry may possibly be blind, but he is assuredly no "man"—and the blinded sailors and soldiers are real men, thank Heaven for it!

As far as the blinded St. Dunstaner is concerned, I am convinced that more depression of spirits is caused by the so-called "sympathy" which he gets from the outside world and his own friends than any realisation of his misfortune. To give one particular instance: some kind lady will come along with the desire to take some man to the theatre "to cheer him up." He will appreciate her kindness and he would have enjoyed the theatre, had not the kind woman performed some tactless action before a crowd and so marred his pleasure. The blind man who is a man hates the world to know that he is blind—*unnecessarily*. All he needs is to be treated normally and with respect, as one treats normal people—or, if one treats him more gently and kindly than one usually treats one's fellow men and women, then this gentleness must only be apparent as a secret, as it were, between him and you. The blind man seems to possess a very great capacity for loving—and you will always find that he clings more than ever to the man or woman whose love for him teaches him what to do and what not to do, the man or woman who, as it were, brings him into the world of sighted people and

does not—however sympathetically, however kindly—thrust him into a little cotton-wool world of his own, where he lives, maybe, in comfort, but apart from the whirl which is everyday life.

Contrary to general belief, I have discovered that very few psychological changes take place in the blinded man owing to his blindness. The man who was morose before he lost his sight will be morose afterwards; the cheerful one before will be equally cheerful when he is blind; the pessimist will look on the dreary side of things; the optimist will still remain optimistic. If there be any real change in the natures of some men, it is generally in those who possess weak characters or colourless ones. These may perhaps follow, as it were, the line of least resistance—just as they would otherwise have done had they never lost their sight, with, perhaps, the pace a little more accelerated on account of their blindness. So long as the blinded man is not, as it were, thrust into a special world alone, he will always remain his normal self. So long as he feels that he is leading an average normal life, so long will he be average normal. Rowing, dancing, walking, talking; amusements such as theatres, concerts, lectures—in all these things his handicap is felt scarcely at all after the first bitter realisation. So long as he can indulge in these things as other men indulge in them, so long will he remain normal among other normal men. He will be silent

and depressed occasionally—just as we all are; he will feel reckless and elated for no apparent cause—as we too; he will hope and fear, and hope again and despair—in the same way as most of us do these things, though, perhaps, each emotion will be a little more apparent. The greatest danger which besets him is that of being made to think too seriously and too long about his blindness. It is to so contrive that he avoids this danger as much as possible, which is the duty of all those who love and respect him. The chief thing to remember is that, living in darkness as he does, he cannot throw off evil thoughts as we can by change of scene; he cannot find forgetfulness in watching and observing the life around him. Thus it is doubly necessary that all the things which he can indulge in should be found for him to do. *He must be brought into the life which surrounds him.* And he must be brought into this life as a man who, except for his handicap, is as full of hope and life and energy and forcefulness as any man; who is equal, if not superior, to all those with whom he comes in contact. Thus, in spite of his misfortune, he will be a *happy* blind man —and there is no reason that, given health and strength, the blind man should not be very happy. He depends upon the love and friendship which surround him for much of his happiness—as we all do. And if those who love him cannot always make him forget his blindness, let them strive as

far as possible to make him *laugh* at the handicap which his loss entails. There is nothing like laughter to bring abnormal circumstances back to the normal. Laughter brings with it that spirit of comradeship which is all the blinded man needs to give him zest and interest in his own life. So far as he is able to lead the normal life of an ordinary man, so far will he, himself, be normal too. Given cheerful, healthy conditions—beyond the fact that all blind men are apt to be suspicious and somewhat jealous—there need be no fear that his misfortune will prove too great for him to bear. And even this suspicion and jealousy, so characteristic of blind men, are, after all, but the suspicion and jealousy of a man who fears that he is being forced to live in a world apart from other men. And there is indeed no necessity that he should do so. As a worker, as a useful citizen of the world, and above all as a true friend and companion, I would pit a blinded sailor or soldier against any other special class of man in the whole world. Blindness seems to have given them the genius to comprehend the essentials of human happiness which it is given to few sighted people to perceive.

CHAPTER XVII

A LAST WORD

ALL that was done at St. Dunstan's was a tribute to the soldiers blinded in the war, some recognition of what was owed to them, the most practical form of sympathy that could be offered, an expression of gratitude.

The men, too, were very grateful; through their letters ran messages of thanks for the help St. Dunstan's had given them, to the unseen friends who provided for them, cared for them and entertained them just at the moment when things were darkest. Here, therefore, I may, perhaps, be their spokesman, and in expressing their thanks include at the same time my own.

From all parts of the world came contributions towards the support of St. Dunstan's, making it possible to do things in a free-handed way, so that nothing was wanted that could help to secure the success of our plans.

A great deal of this money came from those whose gifts represented not only common generosity, but personal sacrifice, and most ungrudgingly was personal service given in collecting, in

organising fêtes and a hundred ways of enlisting public interest. A very able Concert Party of Blind Musicians, organised and directed by Lady Pearson, fulfilled ceaseless rounds of engagements for the benefit of St. Dunstan's. Their admirable efforts resulted in a very substantial contribution to the large and ever-increasing cost of upkeep. A special Fund which was organised in India also provided most welcome help. In the main the cost of erecting the many temporary buildings which were needed was defrayed by the Prince of Wales's Fund.

The Press, too, helped in the same spirit. At home and throughout the British Empire, indeed wherever in the world the English language is spoken, proprietors and editors afforded unstinted co-operation in this work for the blinded soldiers. If these men, forming pictures in the mind's eye, could have visualised *en masse* all the people who, in one way or another, thought of them, what an astonishing sensation they would have felt! Trying to do this myself I realise more than ever how hopeless is the task of conveying any adequate idea of the gratitude that needs expression. And then there were the people, nearly a thousand in number, who came regularly into contact with the men, holding out to them a helping hand. One thinks of the women workers especially—of how they contributed to the happiness of the men, of how they gladdened their hearts,

taking the trouble to understand them, and to bring just the right kind of cheer and sympathy to bear on their problems. In his earliest days of blindness, while still lying in hospital, the soldier who had lost his sight was given most tender care by the Sisters, Superintendents and Nurses. Most of the work of St. Dunstan's was gladly undertaken by women—many quite young girls—who had given up the leisure of comfortable homes, made this sacrifice, or some other, to do whatever they might to express their sympathy with these men, their unbounded admiration for them. Altogether some six hundred women devoted all or a great part of their time to this labour of love. At each of the establishments which, grouped together, formed St. Dunstan's, there was a Matron, and an Assistant Commandant in charge of the departments that concerned what may be called the domestic life of the men. The Matron was the Supreme Mother, and it is well to remember that many of these soldiers were mere lads to whom, in trying moments, a woman knew better than any one else what to say. A Sister with two trained nurses and two V.A.D.'s presided over each dispensary with a mother's care and more than a mother's skill. Under the direction of the eminent voluntary oculists and the doctor, who came daily, this little staff attended to the men's eyes and to any who might, by chance, come on the sick list, while

those who fell more seriously ill were cared for in our own little private hospital. And here it is opportune to say a word of gratitude to the distinguished specialists in almost every branch of the medical profession who freely placed their invaluable services at our disposal. There were, besides the housekeepers, various Lady Superintendents and a little army of V.A.D.'s, whose brightness brought charm to this guest-house of ours, who worked untiringly, often in the most humble capacities, who did everything to help these blinded soldiers forget their blindness.

Some of the V.A.D.'s looked after the arrivals, departures and times of leave, arranging for cars to take the men out, for the fares and escorts of those who were travelling by train, for all that had to be planned in connection with outside invitations, theatres, walks, excursions and week-end outings. Others devoted themselves to reading the men's letters for them, writing for them when they wanted this help, unpacking the parcels they received, reading aloud to them, in short, helping in every way to entertain them in their hours of leisure.

The Red Cross Organisation to which they belonged was ever more than ready to help St. Dunstan's in every way which lay in its power.

It was the V.A.D.'s, too, who undertook the work of the linen-room, looking after the men's outfits, all the repairs and sewing that had to be

done, who made the beds in the wards, doing the housework throughout the buildings, and waiting on the men in the dining-rooms. Some visited the newcomers in hospital, some helped in the care and entertainment of the officers, or drove motor-cars, or assisted at the telephone, or taught music, while a special band of untiring helpers taught Braille and netting under the superintendence of the ladies who were responsible for these departments, and, without making a catalogue of their work, it will be seen how much was owed to their assistance, and above all, to the spirit in which it was given.

While the Matrons looked after one side of the men's lives, the Secretary, coming in contact with them on the administrative side, in the same way earned their devotion. In all the offices were women doing work on which also the happiness of the men depended.

In the different chapters of this book I have spoken more in detail of the great number of women who came regularly to St. Dunstan's to take the men for walks, to row and dance with them, and to give instruction in the class-rooms—and, indeed, it is no wonder that the men now settled in their homes look back with gratitude to all this help so freely given in the days when most of all this sympathy, so practical, so understanding, was needed.

On behalf of the blinded officers and men, as in

my own name, I desire most cordially to thank all these women for their devoted work, and with them the adjutants and the great number of men who, as instructors and superintendents, and in all sorts of capacities, assisted me at St. Dunstan's. And I do not think that any thanks would give them such pleasure as the thought that St. Dunstan's has ceased to be just the name of a Hostel where help was ready in time of need, but has become an enduring symbol of admiration, of affection, of an inexhaustible care for these blinded soldiers, men of a victorious army, themselves victors a second time in the manner which this book records.

[redacted]

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